



GUERRA

ALFRED NEUMANN'S NOVELS

The Devil

1928


The Rebels

1929

Guerra

1930

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GUERRA

BY ALFRED NEUMANN
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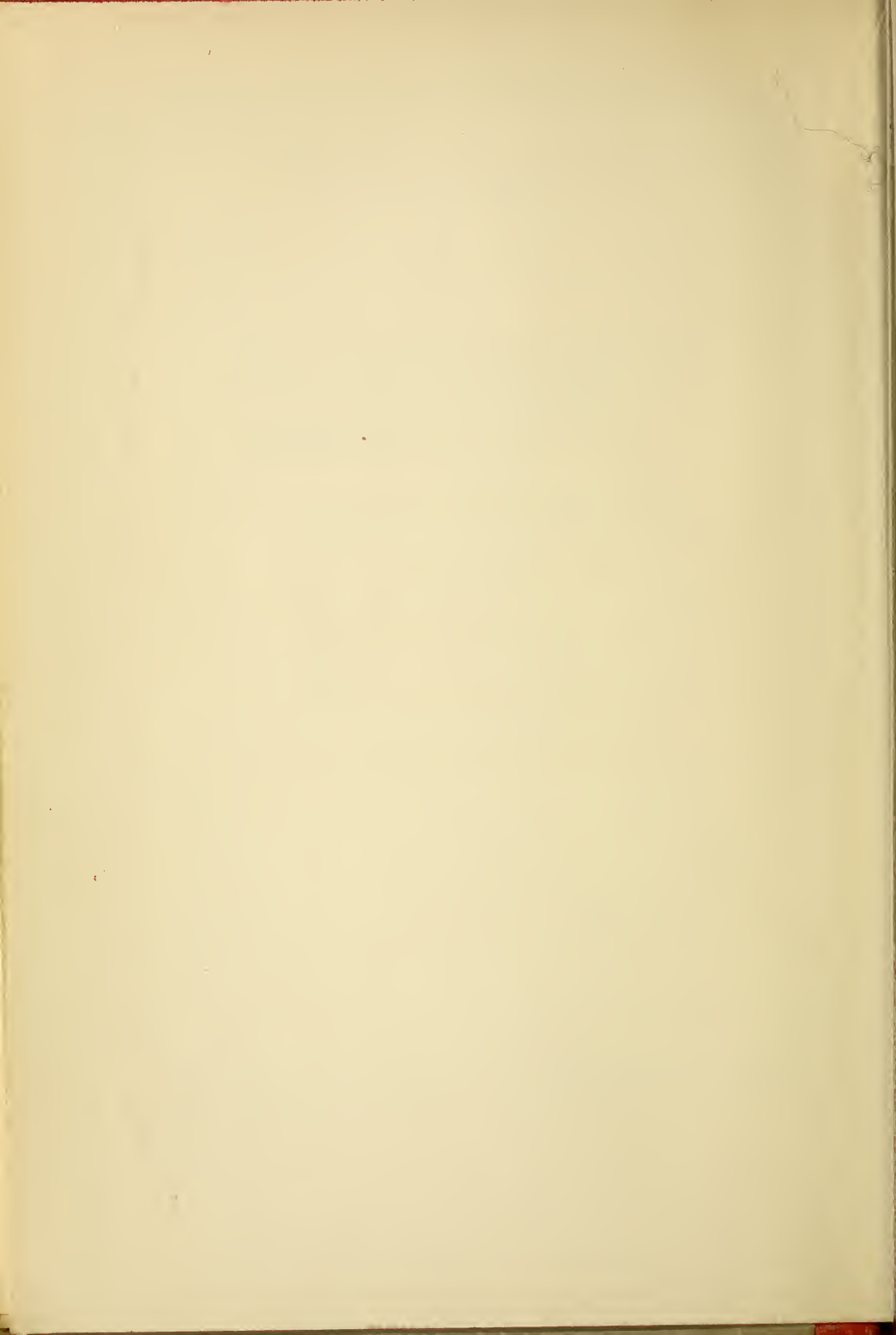
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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

IN ITS DIVINE DEPTHS THE HUMAN SOUL
REMAINS EVER INNOCENT

—*THE REBELS*



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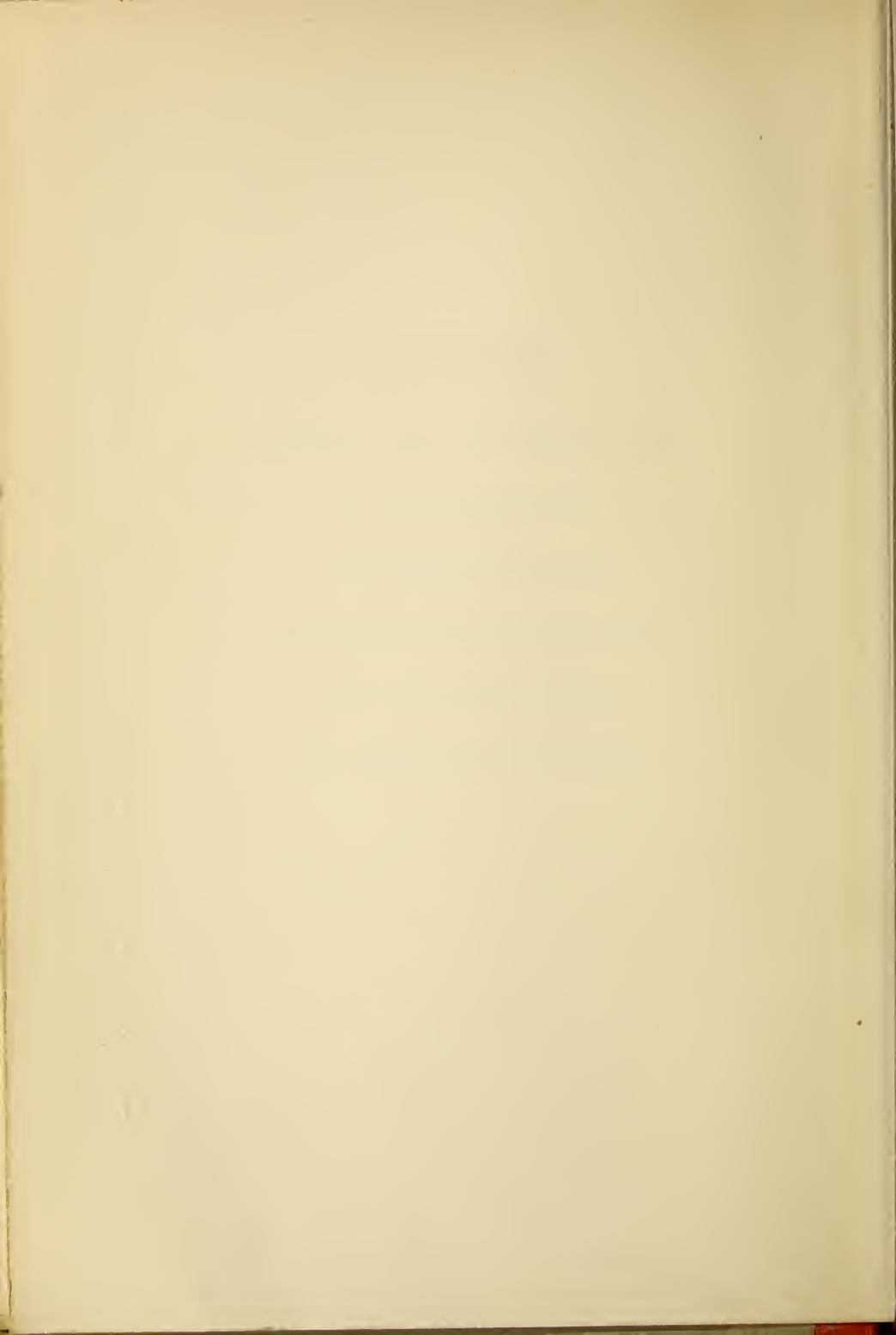
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GUERRA



THE CLOUDS GATHER AGAIN

I

LIFE, magic life, never stands still, though its pace may slow down for a while. And when Fate seems hardly to lift a finger for five or ten years, she seldom allows us this respite out of kindness of heart, but is moved, as a rule, by sheer wantonness. All of a sudden, frequently without warning, she flings us back into the vortex, and at a moment's notice life surges wild and turbulent once more.

After serving seven years of his sentence, Gasto Guerra, the leader of the Tuscan Independence Movement, escaped from his confinement in the town of Portoferraio in Elba, where he had been condemned to imprisonment for life. It would have been no difficult matter to evade his custodians much sooner, for their vigilance grew more lax year by year, and he might easily have smuggled himself aboard some craft bound for Piedmont, Corsica, or the south of France. But he had made no such attempt. The first two years of his detention in the island had been spent in the fortress of Longone, and they had been hard years. After that he had inhabited an attractive little cottage in San Giovanni, a fishing village on the Gulf of Portoferraio, amid vines, olive-trees, and aloes, and seemed contented with his lot. The two old soldiers to whom the kindly Governor of the island had entrusted the task of keeping watch on this political prisoner, and who also lived in the cottage, soon discovered, in the sunshine of Guerra's smile, that their office was not only superfluous, but also distasteful, and it required but little effort on the part of their charge to make them his humble slaves. True, their arms, striking terror to the hearts of all beholders, hung in the narrow vestibule of the cottage and were taken down once a fortnight when

one or other of the guards had to present the report — which incidentally was always the same — at the Commandant's office, in the fine yellow house below Fort Stella. It was here that Napoleon had lived from the 3rd of May 1814 to Sunday the 26th of February 1815. Guerra smiled whenever he looked at it—he felt he must apologize for the grim irony of history, which had brought his miserable existence into touch with the ten months Napoleon had spent there. In the various papers published by the secret Radical presses, which seemed to multiply with tropical luxuriance and flooded his cottage door unasked, this Elba *motif* was repeated with endless variations, and although at first he had felt ashamed, he had ultimately learnt the value of its sardonic appeal.

He had led a halcyon existence, writing poetry, seducing the fisher girls, watching the hair turn grey above his hard, handsome features, and thinking and reflecting. Indeed, so calmly had he whiled away the time that occasionally when the sirocco roaring across the waters disturbed his slumbers, the thought of his enforced inaction would shoot like a pang through his heart and he was afraid that his patience and the disgraceful security he enjoyed would see the end of him. God in Heaven! What if death came too soon—what if death came to Elba, to this delightful and absurdly contented little island, and too soon—ay, all too soon—put an end to him? Hitherto his life also had been a mountainous little island, and any greatness it might achieve lay in the future.—But at last the pale green dawn would break, and the blue sea shimmer comfortingly, while the orange groves filled the air with their fragrance, and the town lay like a golden jewel beneath his gaze. And the day, friendly smiling day, was back!

Guerra, the number of whose years was the same as the last two figures of the century, had the political rhythm of the Age in his blood. The thirties had remained outwardly peaceful, but below the surface the heart of the Party beat on indefatigably and warded off eternal sleep. The stormy days following the July Revolution in Paris, at the beginning of the

decade, lay far away in the past, as completely petrified into a picturesque gesture as the drama of Guerra's earliest political activities, which lay even further away. The memory of the politics, the Party tactics, the revolution, and all the ideas of those days, which, although so recent, were already shrouded in a meaningless mist and loomed fantastic through the fog of the passing years,—all these memories survived only to lend an additional horror to the grandiose disturbances lying ahead beyond the azure adagio of Elba.

A hard but salutary discipline for the soul was the memory of the people and events of those days, which had whirled in a vortex about his being or been flung headlong from him. Three stood out conspicuous, importuning him with their mute reproach in strange fantastic dreams, and they were the memorable dead. There was Checca, his lieutenant, her dried-up spinster's frame animated by a miraculous passion, a peerless inarticulate heroine, the exploitation of whose maniacal intrepidity filled him with shame. For while his life still flowed on noiseless and empty, the two shots that had put out her life would unexpectedly ring in his ears—those quick shots in the occupied cellars of the Ghetto, that mad duel between the advancing woman and the sappers, for his sake, for the sake of the Cause, which he had then abandoned. She had sacrificed herself for him, the beloved leader. Whenever he reached this point in his meditations, his skin would turn slightly yellow with pent-up rage against himself, and if on the following morning he were still jaundiced and monosyllabic, Orestes and Othello, the two old soldiers, would keep out of his sight as much as possible. But this was a rare occurrence.

This woman's simple and unhesitating gift of herself in life and death did not become less with the years, but by some mysterious law seemed to attain ever more munificent proportions—indeed, Guerra noticed as he approached the forties that Checca's generous self-sacrifice contributed more than anything else towards equipping his soul for the great

years that were to come. The great years — thus did he think of his future during his period of stubborn waiting on the Isle of Elba. And he prepared himself for them, not by training his mind and will, which seemed to him sufficiently disciplined, but by taking in hand his character and steadfastness of purpose. And in so doing he utilized all the weapons to hand — shame, criticism, irony, and an honest survey of his own and other men's accomplishments.

By means of this alembic of the spirit, even the rare dreams in which the three spectres appeared to him, reproaching him with their death, had a certain salutary effect. Checca stirred and helped him most, because she had lived and died so near him. But the other two, her crippled father, Gioia, and old Baron Steiner, whom, by the bye, he hardly knew, and who were complete strangers to each other, remained of lasting importance. They had entered the action of his political drama from opposite ends of the social hierarchy, and each in his way — Gioia always passive and driven hither and thither against his will, and the diplomat Steiner always active — had succeeded by his personality in making that drama a tragedy. The marvellously delicate yet tough meshes of human relationship had been so inextricably woven about Guerra, as their unworthy centre-piece, bound to these two strangely different old men, that, in the upheaval of the abortive revolution and the arrest of the leader, the strings of fate had been tightly drawn about their none too guilty necks and had ended their exhausted lives.

When, on that evening of February 1831, Guerra had been arrested in the Florentine Ghetto, he was very far from suspecting that the connexion of these two old men with his fate would prove their undoing. Gioia, the half-mad messenger of the Party, had been left unmolested in the Ghetto, while Guerra's sister, who had been arrested with her brother, and who had probably lodged the information leading to the assassination of Steiner by the Party, had been separated from him on their way to the Bargello. But a fortnight later, on

Ash Wednesday, Guerra's victorious enemy, Caminer, the ruddy and truculent President of Police, had entered the Party leader's cell (he came almost daily) and told him about the two events of Carnival Sunday — Gioia's ludicrous attempt on the life of the Grand Duke, which had ended in the death of the criminal, and the discovery of old Baron Steiner with a Carbonaro dagger in his heart.

Raising his red eyebrows, the Bargello had immediately followed up this information by saying: "Have you, my dear friend, either one or the other or possibly both of these crimes on your conscience?" And parting his lips so as to reveal his teeth, he had quickly added that in view of the Grand Duke's obvious partiality for the prisoner, the best reply would be a flat negative, which Guerra, without a moment's hesitation, almost indignantly hurled at him.

Soon afterwards his sentence had been promulgated — imprisonment for life in a fortress. And he had been conveyed with all due honour to Fort Longone on the Isle of Elba. There, in a large, clean, and not unpleasant room, in the rocky stronghold, behind a big window, with the dull little town at his feet, a brilliant avenue of aloes before him, and the gulf beyond glittering in the sunshine, or a sheet of rippling blackness at night, with the cypresses of Fucardo beyond, his suspicions about himself began to haunt him. His thoughts first turned to Gioia, whom, in one of the most ghastly moments of his life, he had tried to saddle with the task of killing the Grand Duke; and passed on to Steiner, whose punishment by the Party he had suggested to his sister, although he half divined how humanely pure and unpolitical his opposition had been, dictated purely by friendship and pity for poor Maria Corleone. . . . From the dead he turned to the living whom his life had shaken like a dreadful storm.

Princess Corleone never communicated with him, even through one of the many secret channels which evaded the Grand Duke's censorship. But Guerra knew that, in exile in

Rome, or possibly once again admitted to the Duke's favour in Florence, she was suffering more than he was from this compulsory silence, though, now that he was looking at it in retrospect, it was possible she felt his influence on her life less than he imagined. He knew that she still loved him and, now that his imprisonment must seem more terrible in her eyes than her own banishment, would take the load of guilt on to her own shoulders and, with that brave mysterious desire of women, would wish to absorb the invisible soul, conscience, and guilt of her beloved, as well as his body. The continued mystic sway of all-powerful Fate over the lives it had already influenced made Guerra feel that the harm he was doing her now was even greater than it had been in the past. "Why should it not suffice," he asked himself, "that for ten years I dragged that unfortunate woman after me, this way and that, from the giddy heights of her aristocratic position down to the depths of love and politics, and that when at last my insignificant little revolution burst out and blew her sky high, I cared not a straw whether she escaped with life and limb?" The two who had taken care to see that she did herself no injury in her fall were old Baron Steiner and the worthy Grand Duke. But he — Guerra? Whom had he cared for throughout all this exploitation of men and women — whom but himself? His value must surely be great to survive at such a price! — Great indeed! he thought; the purpose of his life must of a truth be lofty! And if that were so, he must learn to achieve his end without so much help, without requiring a foundation of other folks' misery.

What was the significance of these peaceful, roseate days on the Isle of Elba, he wondered, which gave him so much time for reflection and contemplation, while they devoured Maria Corleone's beauty? Time, too, was on his side and against the lady. "Princess Maria will soon be forty," he thought, "like me; and when I close my eyes, I like to imagine how she has changed. But how can I help the partiality of Fate, or this fresh suffering in store for her?"

For by the old suffering, together with the new which came in the ordinary course of events, life seemed ever to ally herself afresh with him, with Guerra, the pain-provoker. Yet what cure was there for the suffering of others? Pity is cheaper than misery and lighter to bear. And what of the greatest and most terrible and far-reaching influence that had ever gone forth from him, and which, in its vicious circlings, had threatened even himself — would it die down now? Was the little virtue a man could acquire strong enough for any strain? His sister Madda —

Even his island peace was interrupted by an experience arising out of the terrible temptation that lay like a devil's shadow over his sister. In the third year of his imprisonment, a few weeks after he had been released from his confinement in the fortress and had taken up his quarters in the little summer residence of San Giovanni, Government business brought to the Isle of Elba the newly-appointed Inspector of the Forces and State Commissioner, Pompeo Caminer, President of the Buon Governo and the victor of 1831, who had just been created a peer of the realm. It was only after he had been on the island two or three days that the upheaval caused in the sleepy community informed Guerra of his presence. One of the old soldiers, the garrulous Othello, with the petty spite and malicious glee of the underling, described the agitation in Portoferraio after the inspection of the Government offices and the various forts of the island by the new Chief, adding that certain officials had been removed and new regulations issued to the garrison and the civilian population. Guerra was not altogether pleased by the news and was afraid his old antagonist might also take measures against him. And when, that same day, a Government orderly came to inform him that Caminer would call on him at midday, and told him not to leave the house, Guerra was forced to conclude that, for some reason or other, as a result of the latter's machinations, the Government was going to put an end to his pleasant sojourn in San Giovanni and send him back to the fortress. As he

walked round his cottage, which was covered with mauve wistaria, fragrant, light, and full of colour, the bright, cheerful world looked like a wanton dancer sporting before his eyes, and he struggled to preserve his composure and equanimity.

The Government boat bearing the Commissioner across the gulf had been visible to Guerra for some time. She was still so small that she was distinguishable only by her whiteness and the flag flying from the stern, and as he watched her, it struck him how easily a great fist could have dashed the bright white craft down into the depths of the sea. And he could not help thinking how desirable such a consummation would have been for a good many people, in fact for the future of the whole State. Presently he saw that, but for the sailors who were rowing, there was only one man on board—Caminer. That the fellow should come alone filled him with astonishment.

He was standing in the garden and could see Caminer's ruddy head bobbing up and down between the low walls on either side of the steps leading up the side of the rock from the beach, a black cigar stuck between his scrubby beard and moustache. If, thought Guerra uneasily, a long, sharp knife were planted across the steps from wall to wall, that ruddy head would be sliced off and roll away. But lo! the broad, solid shoulders beneath that head were already visible, and in a moment the whole sturdy body emerged from the narrow stairway. Caminer stopped in front of the little garden door that stood open, looked at Guerra with round, red, and apparently embarrassed eyes, and threw his cigar away.

"It takes it out of one a bit, my dear fellow," he observed, waiving all ceremony, and entered the garden. Guerra bowed, but said nothing, and they went into the cottage together; the two old soldiers stood trembling at attention, presenting their unfamiliar arms.

"Get out!" Caminer exclaimed peremptorily as he passed them; "go to the boat down there!" And the two figures clattered through the garden. Caminer pulled off his high hat and hung it up. "There's nobody else in the house to overhear us,

is there?" he inquired. Replying that there was not, Guerra opened the door into his little study. He was suddenly conscious of an extraordinary feeling of safety. Caminer stepped in and glanced out of the window across the gulf.

"This is a place to delight a poet," he observed, and Guerra, who was close behind him, nodded. Caminer turned brusquely round.

"A poet," he repeated almost maliciously, "but are you a poet?"

Guerra smiled faintly. What strange burden was weighing on this man's heart?

"I like it here," he replied. "Yes, possibly I am a poet!"

"I don't believe it," replied Caminer. "I don't believe you'll die here, any more than you do."

And he looked him straight in the face, with eyes that Guerra suddenly felt he could not meet.

"What is it you want of me, President Caminer?" he asked irritably.

"For the moment, Guerra, we are surely not enemies," the ruddy brute replied, with a strained smile.

The prisoner shrugged his shoulders. Then in low tones Caminer added: "Madda—" and stopped. His companion threw up his hands and turned pale.

"What were you saying?" he asked, coughing nervously. Caminer pressed the point of his beard down on his breast.

"You must surely be making plans to escape, Guerra?"

"No!"

"Why not?"

"What is this about Madda, Caminer?" he asked, stepping up to him.

The red-headed creature thrust his head forward.

"Don't you know anything about her? Don't you know where she is at the present moment?"

"No!"

"Don't you even guess, dear friend?"

"No!" exclaimed Guerra rudely.

"I think you're lying," said Caminer, throwing his weight on to the other leg. "But it doesn't matter! — Besides, I've no need to be afraid of you." And passing a hand across his brow, he added: "She's no longer with the Franciscan nuns. She has run away."

Guerra bit his lips. And as Caminer volunteered nothing further, he urged him to proceed.

"Well, what next — what next . . . damn it all!"

The Bargello scratched his beard and closed his eyes.

"You are not jealous, are you, my friend? — That is impossible, surely!"

"Well?" Guerra repeated, his face quite close to Caminer's.

"For some time," continued the latter, blinking good-humouredly, "for some time I have owned a little property in the valley of the Arno, close to Signa — that's where she is."

"Well?"

"One night, when the sea is calm, you will get into a boat and row over to Corsica — she wants it. Or I will put a sailing-vessel at your disposal; it would be safer. And if you attempt to rebel again, I shall have you re-arrested. — But now you must escape, it is Madda's wish . . ."

Guerra was so ghastly pale that his companion looked at him in alarm.

"I shall remain here," he rejoined. "My hour has not yet come."

"My God!" muttered Caminer, "my God, but let me keep the woman. . . ."

"No!" Guerra replied, turning his back on him. "And now enough of that!"

2

Yet this sombre scene, blended though it had been with the beauty of the island, faded away at last with the years that followed. Guerra's peace remained undisturbed, and he continued to brood over right and wrong. His sister was not

more deeply incriminated than himself, and the place each would one day occupy was clearly defined. He sent her only three messages in cipher, though not immediately after Caminer's visit, but about three months later. After some delay — for during these years the squandering of time was of no consequence — a message reached Elba from the Central Bureau of the Party, stating that Madda was in Paris. Strange to say, Guerra did not expect any reprisals on the part of the Bargello, and he was not mistaken; Caminer remained silent and invisible.

Then came the year of the European plague. The sinister wave of the Black Death rolled from north to south, and Guerra began to wonder whether the outcry it provoked would be loud enough to drown all else and stifle the feeble strains of history in the making — the weak voices of the few men who counted, among whom he reckoned himself. But, as he could see no purpose in such a consummation, he did not believe in it. The plague spread through Livorno and Piombino. Only feeble ripples of the epidemic and of the mad rumours that accompanied it managed to cross the sea, and the island was almost untouched by the disease. But, thanks to the prevalent confusion of the authorities and the difficulties of communication with the Tuscan coast, excellent opportunities again occurred for flight either north or west across the sea. Guerra, however, gave not a thought to such possibilities. Perhaps he was still dreading the Party's secret intentions against him; for although it would certainly not have been easy to prove that his behaviour during the disturbances of 1831, and at the time of his surrender, had been in any way reprehensible, denunciation by some hostile person, or even the failure of the uprising, was quite sufficient to set the machinery of the Party's judicial system in action. Guerra was well aware of this, and the fact that he had been in touch with the Central Bureau for some considerable time and was receiving monthly reports from them, by no means implied that he had been exonerated. Here, too, time alone could help him, as indeed it did.

For the decrepit old man who, a nameless and almost mythical figure, had guided the destinies of the Party from Paris, at last died. Guerra, who was aware that the old man's last illness, which had dragged on longer than was generally known, was undermining the great political Party he led, regarded his death as necessary. The fact that Guerra's name had figured in the list of candidates for the office of supreme leader, without having been included in the final vote, seemed at least to indicate that he would not be proscribed; and he waited, knowing full well that his hour had come.

The new Chief was a famous poet patriot from Piedmont, a man still in his prime, who proceeded without delay to banish all mysticism and ceremonial claptrap from the organization of the Party and put an end to the anonymity both of the Supreme Head and of Party orders. He also did away with the secrecy of the Central Bureau and its offshoots, as far as was compatible with the interests of the Party, and revealed the whole movement as the powerful political instrument it professed to be. Any vestiges of mystery and uncertainty that remained served only to increase the effect of the overt acts of this well-organized and energetic body. Towards the end of the decade it had already become plain how ephemeral were the cheap victories of its earlier years, and the determined frontal resistance of the reactionary forces. The Great Powers concerned endeavoured to consolidate the reactionary tendencies, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs officially declaring that he cared little for the Italian Independence Movement. But as the Central Bureau in Paris, heedless of protests from Austria and her Italian dependents, did not relax its efforts, the Strong Man in Vienna began to suspect his colleague in Paris of secret Jacobinic tendencies and of being possibly as clear-sighted as he himself would like to have been.

Whereupon he pointed to the danger to be expected in the forties, and warned everyone against the "Young Italians," as the old Carbonari now styled themselves. This he did neither from clear-sightedness nor from fear; for at heart he

regarded every movement which was opposed to the kind of State organization he represented as fantastic and hopeless. His warnings were prompted rather by reasons of State administration; for his rich experience told him that without a certain tenseness in the heavy limbs of the body politic it would lose its flexibility. It is true that he never went beyond the alarm stage and the usual muscle massage provided by emergency conditions, in the creation and justification of which he was a past-master, whenever monarchy began to nod its head in any country. But when the situation was not grave, the warning sufficed, and during the last twenty years things had never been so serious as to call for anything more than a warning.

The Lombardo-Venetian Government would put a few literary men and students in prison and commend their methods to the south, while the Italian States obtained from the Cabinet in Vienna certain information regarding the reorganization of the Young Italy Party; but the notes on the subject were relegated like many another similar report *ad acta*, for was not everything in the south perfectly calm and peaceful?

It was at about this time that Guerra made his escape. He was just as ignorant of the memorandum from Vienna as of a certain conversation inspired by it which the Grand Duke had had with Caminer, dealing with the question of his safe custody. The significance of this conversation lay not so much in the subject itself—for, ever since Maria Corleone had returned to Florence, the Grand Duke had refrained from all mention of the rebels—as in the fact that Caminer refused to share the Grand Duke's fears that the renewed activity of the Party might lead Guerra to contemplate escape.

"Why increase his cheaply won reputation as a martyr?" he exclaimed, when the Grand Duke proposed to have him shut up in the fortress of Longone again. "There is at present no reason to keep him in close confinement. A man who far more richly deserves to have a warrant out against him is Guerra's paladin, the journalist Scaleterra, who, a month after

his release from the castle of Volterra, placed his services at the disposal of the revolutionary press of Turin."

"Time and the sweets of high office have tamed you," observed the Grand Duke with a smile. The Bargello made an awkward movement with his hand and shoulder. He had had opportunities of hearing all manner of things about Guerra and was perhaps beginning to understand the sympathy which the Prince himself had once felt for this bewildering personality. The Grand Duke changed the subject.

When the telegram announcing Guerra's flight arrived, and the Grand Duke, pale with excitement, was crumpling it up in his fist, Caminer coolly remarked: "After all, worse things might have happened!"

"A fine excuse, my dear fellow!" exclaimed the infuriated monarch.

"Of course," Caminer rejoined calmly, "of course I tender my resignation, your Highness, if you attach any importance to the incident."

The Grand Duke glanced quickly up, his blue eyes vacant with astonishment.

"Nobody mentioned that," he said in confusion; "but do you attach so little importance to the fellow, then?"

"On the contrary, your Highness! But when the great day of reckoning arrives, as it must sooner or later, there is no other man I should prefer to see at the head of the revolutionary forces."

"Why? — Because you fancy you know his tactics?"

Caminer shrugged his shoulders.

"If humanity can be called tactics. — But what do we mean when we speak of 'humanity'? All I understand by the term in his case, is that such a man is unlikely to make much use of the guillotine. — And does that not mean a good deal, your Highness?"

The Grand Duke slowly raised his head and looked past his collocutor. "What manner of man is speaking to me —" he observed with drawling emphasis.

Caminer threw his weight on to the other leg and, with an amused smile, held his tongue.

"Guerra has escaped," the Grand Duke informed Maria Corleone that evening.

She looked at him with calm sad eyes, without a trace of surprise, but said nothing. He felt that their relationship had undergone a great change since her four years of exile in Rome.

3

The April day had been very beautiful and utterly free from care. The syringas, lemons, aloes, and Judas-trees were in full blossom in the garden. Guerra was sitting in his study tearing up papers. The top leaves of the palms in the centre of the garden swayed to and fro in the mysterious breeze, while the sea stretched out a shimmer of blue before the house, as though summer had come. But all this was familiar—to both eye and ear, though a change was pending in his life as well as in the season. In the shade of the little stable his spotless white dog had already been waiting some time to give his master his usual morning whine of joy. All this pleased him, particularly on that day, for was he not already a different man from the Guerra of that hour on the previous day? Was he not being thrust back into the world and looking wistfully from the gate at his little isle of bliss? How quickly and noiselessly does life change its tempo and suddenly put on speed! On the previous day a Corsican captain had arrived and pointed out his boat as it lay at anchor to the north of San Giovanni—a seaworthy vessel, he declared, and there was a new moon and a favourable wind. The man also gave him a little note, containing news from the Central Bureau and enciphered by the hand of the new Chief of the Party himself. It was to the effect that if Guerra so desired, he should avail himself of this opportunity, as, without wishing in any way to influence his plans, the Party naturally set great store by his

active co-operation and ventured to remind him that the hour was at hand when every indispensable man would be wanted at his post.—It was couched in cool and courteous terms—very different from the petulant ritual characterizing the communications of the Party in the old days. Though it may not have been the new tone he detected that had been responsible for Guerra's ready and almost too hasty response, his sense of time and opportunity had certainly helped to kindle the flame once more.

The two old soldiers who guarded him were called Orestes and Othello. Their long and close association with each other had made them grow outwardly so much alike that since Orestes was blind in the left eye, Othello used to keep his own shut. But in character they were very different, Orestes being a silent man, Othello a great talker, and each possessed the other qualities this difference rendered inevitable. In their devotion to their prisoner, however, they were unanimous; he was their lord and they knew his every mood and habit. And now that he had suddenly taken it into his head to tear up his papers, though hitherto he had religiously preserved every scrap, and was doing so with a set face that neither of them liked, they exchanged suspicious glances from time to time and felt that a storm was brewing. These periods of bad temper and suppressed rage, *rabbia*, had occurred at intervals, coming and going without apparent reason, and they were quite used to them.

"*Rabbia* . . ." muttered the taciturn one, as he scraped the asparagus. The talkative one proceeded to indulge in conjecture, paying no heed to Orestes's sceptical murmurs.

The luncheon hour did not bring them much enlightenment. The Signore ate in silence and then took his siesta. Late in the afternoon he summoned them both to his room.

"I should like you to leave me alone in the house tonight," he said. This was not an altogether unknown occurrence, for ladies had occasionally come up to the cottage, and their visits, especially in the case of the married ones, made the utmost dis-

cretion imperative. The two men grinned and said they would be only too pleased to spend the evening tasting last year's aleatico with some wine-growers of their acquaintance in the neighbouring valley of Capoliveri. Guerra leant back in his chair and looked gravely from one to the other. "Why is he looking at us like that?" they asked themselves; and their previous experience could not supply the answer.

"Poor devils!" exclaimed Guerra. Why did he call them poor devils? — And Othello, the more inquisitive of the two, actually put the question to him.

"Because you will be sent to prison if I escape," he replied. The two men were tempted to laugh and waited for him to smile. "Yes, yes, dear friends," he added, "I am serious! I am going to escape!"

The effect of his words was terrible — shattering. Both men turned pale and suddenly looked old, miserable, and worn out by their tedious grey lives. Orestes opened his white left eye, which he did but seldom, and made one or two helpless gestures of protest. Othello let loose a flood of eloquence, but quickly subsided. Looking at one another, each made a sign to his companion to leave the room, and as they went out, they both forgot the usual little formalities — the faint martial click of the heels, the flourish of an imaginary musket, and the military stamping of the feet for the first two steps. With bowed heads they simply dashed out of the room. Guerra bit his lip excitedly and listened to their animated discussion in the kitchen, in which Othello's voice naturally predominated. In a little while all was quiet and Guerra looked towards the sea, which in a trice had come to mean no more to him than the element bearing the ship he was to board.

At seven o'clock, when the gulf was already losing its colour, the two returned.

"We are going now," said Orestes simply. Othello, whose emotions were stronger, went up to his master and kissed him on both cheeks.

"But I can't let things go like this," said Guerra softly. "The

Governor will put you in chains and will be relieved of his office himself. — I don't want to make too bad a start."

And he looked at Orestes and Othello and then out to the vessel at anchor. "You have no dependents," he said, "and you are attached to me; so why not come with me —"

When it was dark, they rowed over to the ship, which had three lights on the starboard side. The two old soldiers, who had discarded their uniforms, were wearing suits belonging to Guerra, which were many sizes too large for them. Othello, the romanticist, had buckled on his sword and musket and looked like a bandit. They climbed up the ship's side by a rope ladder. The black water beneath them gurgled ominously. "*Mamma mia!*" groaned Othello softly. The captain received Guerra in silence and wasted no words upon his companions. His two sons, whose faces could not be seen in the dim light of the lanterns, hauled in the scanty baggage and moored the little boat by a towing rope. There was a terrifying racket as the anchor was weighed, and the sails flapped in the wind. The three men clung to each other as the boat began to rock, and the captain stowed them below deck, in a corner where mattresses had been laid down for them, stretched some sail-cloth above their heads, and concealed the whole beneath a mountain of dried figs. His "Good-night" sounded faint and far away, as though it came from another world. It was pitch-dark.

At first the trio were so quiet that their mouths might have been sealed by the darkness. Guerra, for his part, had no wish to speak; he was capable of long silences. But his life had begun to move again, and this was more important than the pitching and tossing of the ship. His idyll was dead, and the little island had been wiped out with one broad black stroke of the brush. How glorious was the darkness; for it did not stand still, but bore him vibrating forward! Black sickle of unrest! Glorious unrest! — Guerra stretched the muscles of his arms, legs, and chest. — "I am thirty-eight years of age! Time is in love with me. In ten years' time I shall be forty-eight, as old as the century! Forty-eight! Does not that sound even

more powerful? Ten years—time enough surely for accomplishment by deeds! And action will make me even stronger. In ten years' time, either the world will be ripe for revolution, or else the revolution will already have been victorious. Forty-eight, how strong it sounds! God Almighty loves me." And he began to whistle, lulled and soothed by the rhythm of the ship.

As soon as she was outside the gulf, the vessel began to roll heavily, and the sea, which must now have looked much more forbidding than it had done between Portoferraio and San Giovanni, beat truculently against her sides, upsetting Orestes as much as Othello. But from time to time the sound of Guerra's whistling would give him courage. Moreover, he was the more manly of the two. But Othello, who was nearest to the side of the ship and separated from Guerra by his mate, began to groan.

"Madonna! Help, oh, help!"

"Shut up!" exclaimed Orestes, as though silence were the order for the night. Othello groaned heavily as the ship rose on a mountainous wave, and he found obedience impossible.

"I feel as though the whole heap of figs were on top of me," he moaned, his weak falsetto rising from a chest cramped with fear.

"Well, eat your way through them," replied Orestes unsympathetically.

"Have mercy on my poor soul!" cried Othello feebly.

"I love you both," observed Guerra in soothing tones, "and at daybreak we shall sight Bastia."

"When one's poor soul is unburdened, does one swim better, Sor Gasto?"

"Possibly," Guerra replied with a smile. Othello muttered a rapid prayer between a double pitch and toss of the ship.

"Sor Gasto," he whined, "I have lied to you once or twice and also robbed you a little. . . ."

"And I have done the same to you, Othello *mio*, and tomorrow you will feel solid ground under your feet."

The Signore's good-humoured intervention seemed to

comfort him a little; or perhaps he was sea-sick and holding his head in shame over the basin the captain had taken the precaution of placing beside each mattress. Soon only his groans could be heard, and presently he was quite quiet and probably asleep.

"Signor Guerra, may I ask you a question too?" Orestes suddenly inquired through the inky blackness.

"Certainly, old boy."

"Signor Guerra, supposing I were given the choice between two sound eyes and a United Italy — which ought I to choose?"

Guerra opened his eyes wide. "At the present moment," he argued to himself, "had I not my clear thoughts, and the bright consciousness that tomorrow the sun will shine, I should be blind. Blind! This one-eyed fellow knows the dark side of life and is a thinker. But I am no longer a phrase-mongering tenor. Seven years ago I should have sung him the top C of patriotism. Today I swing high and low, now bright, now gloomy, in the tumult about the country I love — yes — the country I love, for I am destined to rouse her to rebellion! Beautiful and beloved land on the eve of insurrection! Beautiful and beloved like every land and every life on the eve of revolt!" — And he groped for Orestes's hand and pressed it.

"I should certainly choose the eyes, if I were you," he replied.

4

They landed in a little fishing village close to Bastia, on the island of Corsica, and as it was the captain's home, they were able to escape the inquisition of the harbour authorities. One of the chiefs of the Party, a doctor in Bastia, was awaiting with eyes full of wonder and admiration the great martyr and fighter for the Cause of Italian Independence. He had money and a French passport on him. The escort, consisting of the one-eyed Orestes and the livid Othello, who had been forced to leave their weapons on board, did not please him at all, par-

ticularly as neither of them could speak French. Guerra's kindly explanation that he could never leave his friends in the lurch, however, immediately settled the matter, and on the following day Orestes and Othello received their papers, describing them as landowners from Bonifacio, the town on the southern extremity of the island.

The Central Bureau requested Guerra to remain for the time being in the south of France and to acquaint himself with the general conditions there. As Guerra was well aware, this meant that the old Party tradition of sifting and straining was being maintained, and every precaution being taken to prevent the leaders in outlying districts from intruding too suddenly and conspicuously into the electric atmosphere of the Central Bureau. So after a few days' rest in the company of his two old retainers, he took a comfortable fast sailing-vessel to Marseilles *via* Ajaccio, where he was informed that he was to make Arles a provisional base of operations. The carriage which the Chief of the Party placed at his disposal rumbled slowly along the bad roads of Provence, while Orestes and Othello, on the back seat, slept with their mouths wide open. The burning sun poured down on the shabby leather roof of the vehicle, while all around was nothing but olives, endless stretches of stony ground, with an occasional black cypress. This district of Provence, the Bouches-du-Rhône, the Caramague, was much more monotonous, arid, and desolate than the bright triangle of country between Avignon, Nîmes, and Arles. It was a long time since Guerra had beheld this scenery. When was it? — Was it after the revolution of 1821, when he had seen his Turin student battalion decimated and had fled, terribly distressed by his first experience of bloodshed? Or was it after his flight from Milan two years later, when he had been up to every trick and ready for any emergency? He had forgotten! All he remembered was that this landscape, which occasionally reminded him of Tuscany (though Tuscany was brighter, more kindly and heroic; its air was more limpid, its contours more dignified, and with its fairy-like hills, it never

looked flat) — all he remembered was that he had seen this self-possessed country-side, as he did now, only after a flight. But where was the difference? In those days he had been hurried along by a life which might perhaps already have been glorious. But today he had got so far that he himself was in a position to hurry glorious life along if it were necessary. He suddenly laughed aloud and woke up his two old soldiers. Othello, still dazed, and peering out of his little eyes, was ready to laugh too. But Orestes, the more reserved of the two, leaned back again in his corner.

"I was just thinking," Guerra explained, "that the women of Arles are said to be the prettiest in France. And I had to laugh, because I remembered that seventeen — or was it fourteen — years ago the same thought had occurred to me when I was in Provence. The years don't seem to change one very much!"

"What a happy mood you are in, Sor Gasto!" exclaimed Othello cheerfully.

"Have I not every reason to be?" Guerra retorted.

As they were tired, they stopped at the pleasant little town of Salon, although it was only early afternoon, and put up for the night. And thus it came about that, on the following day, after driving through a fine long avenue of chestnuts, they reached Arles about midday. It was a Sunday and the streets were singularly deserted, as were also the houses into which they peeped.

"Quite dead," observed Othello, "but clean."

"That's a contradiction in terms," declared Orestes, who was fond of gainsaying his companion. Suddenly they saw crowds of people thronging the streets leading to the arena.

"*Corrida!*" muttered Guerra, as he read the placards. "Bull-fighting!"

"Bravo!" cried Othello, quite irrelevantly, for he knew nothing about the matter. But the word, as hard as steel, pleased him; moreover, he was always ready to join any holiday-making crowd. He hailed from Siena and was immedi-

ately reminded of the crazy horse-races held at the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin on the vaulted Piazza del Campo. "At home the winners are always beaten until they can hardly stand," he added casually, "for the losers and their supporters have so much spirit."

"That doesn't say much for Siena," rejoined his gloomy friend from Volterra; "there never was much to be said for Siena. For there is always only one winner and many losers. And so one man is attacked by many, though he has performed some sort of feat — just like you Sienese!"

This was a long sentence for Orestes, and Othello, who was a good-natured fellow at heart, did not attempt to argue the point. But Orestes looked almost angrily over his shoulder at him. When he looked to the left, he had to turn his head almost completely round, to allow his sound eye to get into the line of vision, and possibly the sharp twist of his neck made him look angrier than he really was.

"Besides," he concluded, "in this case it is a bull-fight." They had reached a fine hotel on the Place du Forum, and a waiter received them absent-mindedly. But for him, there was no one to be seen. The noble *de* with which Guerra preluded his new name, as he signed the visitors' book in accordance with the details on his passport, procured him a fine large room on the first floor, with a view on the horse-chestnut trees in the pleasant square. Incidentally, ever since they had reached Marseilles, the two old soldiers, even as regards their outward appearance, had, at their own request, returned to their menial rôle. The social fraud involved in wearing clothes belonging to Guerra's rank in life had evidently depressed them.

"*Corrida!*" exclaimed the waiter, uttering the sacred word that was stirring his heart. "The gentlemen will surely be going?"

"I want something to eat, and so do my men. We're hungry."

The waiter was beyond taking any interest in the thoughts

and needs of everyday life. He looked up askance, with an expression of complete bewilderment.

"It begins at three," he replied calmly, "so there is hardly an hour to spare."

"Give me the bill of fare!" Guerra demanded more sternly, although inwardly moved by the conflict in the waiter's soul.

"All reserved seats already taken," muttered the waiter, "taken long ago."

"*Mille tonnerres* — the bill of fare!" cried the gentleman with the *de* before his name, which, incidentally, was quite a fine-sounding one. The waiter made a dash towards the door and, throwing it open, replied irrelevantly over his shoulder:

"Six bulls, my lord, best Spanish breed!"

The dishes were hurled on the table one after the other, hustling on the guests.

"Not so fast!" Guerra commanded, though he was bursting with laughter and infected by the lightning rapidity of the meal.

"Impossible!" declared the waiter, his face glowing. "It begins punctually at three o'clock. And we've got to change yet."

"Who are we?"

"The *chef* and myself. The gentlemen can, of course, remain as they are."

Completely conquered, Guerra laughed aloud. He had been subjecting the waiter's face to a closer scrutiny — it was a harmless face with round cheeks, a short nose, and hairless eyelids, the face of a simpleton, animated or rather illumined to the point of intelligence only by the magic word "*corrida*," with which the whole town was obsessed. There was no cruelty about his smooth countenance, and Guerra felt he must see what sort of a show it could be which was able to cast such a pleasant spell over men's minds. He was animated by the curiosity of the demagogue. Possibly there was something to be learnt from the bulls, he thought with a smile.

After their meal they ascended the steep road to the arena, and, as the time was short, they had to walk very fast. Behind

the iron fence under the arches only two entrances still remained open, giving access to the cheaper places, and the trio were able to secure standing-room on the sunny side. As they passed through the turnstiles, they saw two figures tearing madly up behind them from the rue des Arènes — they were the waiter and the *chef*, who, strange to say, was tall and thin. Highly delighted, Guerra stopped for them, and the waiter took charge of the party. They ascended a huge flight of steps and suddenly saw the vast, crowded, yelling arena spread out beneath them. It was an inspiring sight for the popular leader, who had not seen a crowd for seven years. The spectacle of the assembled thousands filled him with a sort of faint intoxication, a boyish wish to possess the body and voice of a giant, to speak, to shout, and carry that mass of people away with him, to goad and lead them on to some stupendous goal.

Delighted at having arrived in good time after all, the waiter was most attentive and communicative and, fetching some tables, told them to stand on them so as to see over the heads of the people in front and obtain a full view of the arena. Meanwhile he had a great deal to say about the *corridas*, which were quite unreasonably forbidden in France and tolerated only by a few Prefects of Provinces close to the Spanish border, while in Arles, in order to spare the horses, the picadors were unfortunately not allowed to be mounted.

"Thank God for that!" exclaimed Guerra.

"Old cab-horses, your lordship!" cried the waiter indignantly. Some dozen heads below the tables turned round, to have a look at the noble lord in the two-franc places who was defending old hacks.

"Allow me to remind you, Monsieur le Marquis," a curly-headed old fellow with flaming eyes cried over his shoulder, "allow me to remind you that the picadors are men. Surely it is better for horses' entrails to hang on the bulls' horns than for men's. But that's what we've come to!"

Everybody laughed, and Guerra suddenly grew grave, as

though the simple logic of the words had cast a shadow over his sunny soul.

"I don't think I shall enjoy the entertainment very much," he observed to the two old soldiers.

"Look!" cried the waiter, his eyes bursting out of his head. There was a flourish of trumpets, and two mounted men entered the ring, dressed in costumes of the period of the great Turenne or the Swedes under Gustavus Adolphus. The bull-fighters paraded, and various ceremonies were performed before the President's box, after which the bull entered. It was fine to see the massive head gradually entering the bright arena from the dark passage. But then —

He was a good-natured beast, with soft cow-like eyes, and bore no grudge against humanity. He seemed to be puzzled by the red *capas* flourished before his eyes on all sides, and pawed the sand with embarrassment. The people yelled and roared with indignation. The first dart struck him and drew the first blood. The animal shook himself, cast a terrified glance left and right, bellowed faintly, and trotted back to the entrance. The crowd shouted angrily, fresh darts were flung, and the terrified animal ran round the ring looking for a means of escape. The first pair of *banderillas* were driven home — iron lances with barbed points, bearing bright pennants on their shafts. God in heaven, it could not have been so very difficult to plant them in the beast's neck! He was standing with his head lowered, pawing the ground. He bellowed and jumped from side to side, trying to shake them off. They swung about in the wounds, but did not fall. The bull then stood still again, probably because he had discovered that the *banderillas* hurt less if he did not move. Then another pair were flung. He pranced about a little, bellowed, and stood still. The third pair went home. With six *banderillas* in his neck, and six little streams of blood trickling over his glossy black hide, and looking utterly miserable beneath the scorn of the bright *banerettes*, he trotted gently with mincing steps past his tormentors and up to the public barrier, bellowing at the crowd

feebly and reproachfully and still with a suggestion of astonishment. But they would have nothing to do with him, and roared abuse. The beast then turned his back on them, and his expression was so sad that Guerra was obliged to cough to hide a sob. But Orestes, with his familiar twist to the left, turned to look at him, and Guerra did not dare to raise his eyes.

Meanwhile the matador, with a bow and a graceful salute with his sword, begged leave of the President of the *Corridas* to kill the brute, which was still standing on the same spot, though he no longer pawed the sand, but looked panting down to the ground. His torture now began afresh, for the matador had to be given opportunities for displaying the lithe and graceful beauty of his figure. But he was only a mediocre performer, a provincial bull-fighter. The first blow struck a bone, and the sword remained swaying in the wound. The matador made a dash for the parapet. The crowd hissed the man to scorn. The bull bellowed. A stream of blood was gushing from the last wound, and the foam round the beast's mouth was tinged with red, while the pathetic panting of his flanks was horrible to behold. At last he made a wild plunge at one of the *capas*. The *banderillero* dropped it to the ground and fled behind a wooden shield reaching up to his neck. The animal followed clumsily and stopped still in front of the shield, staring at him. He only wanted to complain, nothing more. The man behind the shield suddenly dropped on his knees. The beast turned round and reeled against the second sword. But it was only the third thrust that buried the sword to the hilt in his body so that the point could be seen sticking out from his shaggy breast on the other side, while streams of blood as broad as a hand coagulated on his moist hide like streaks of lacquer. The beast sank on his knees, as the man had done a moment before, and opened his red dripping jaws without uttering a sound. And they gave him his death-blow. It had taken five and twenty minutes to kill him, and horses dragged his body out while the crowd clapped because they were tired of hissing.

"A wretched beast!" exclaimed the waiter, turning round to spit. Guerra, pale and trembling, jumped down from the table. From above, Orestes, who had only half understood the waiter's words, asked hoarsely:

"What did he say?"

"A wretched beast!" replied Guerra, translating the words and almost shouting to relieve his feelings. Orestes raised his arms.

"Yes," he cried, "and ten thousand people who are supposed to be Christians! Or twelve thousand! God, who would believe it!"

Guerra looked up at him. Never before had he heard the one-eyed man shout. He did not even know he had such a powerful voice.

"He at least protests," he thought, meek and crest-fallen. One or two heads had turned to look at Orestes and nod their approval; they had not understood a quarter of what he had said, and assumed that he was indulging in expert criticism of the bull-fight. His last words in particular they took to apply to some great and genuine *torero*. Othello, utterly confused, continued to stare at the ring and repeat: "Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!" It was impossible to say whether he was alluding to the bull-fight or to Orestes's remark.

Guerra turned round as if to go. The waiter, who had followed the last scene somewhat suspiciously, cried indignantly: "You don't mean to say you're going, my lord? Why, the good bulls haven't come on yet — five more!"

"The first was good enough for me," Guerra rejoined, in such low tones that the waiter did not understand. But the one-eyed man beside him thrust his face with its milky eye so close up to the waiter's, hissing the dark word "*Miserabile!*" that he jumped horrified from the table. Orestes too slipped gently from his place of vantage and followed his master. Othello, with staring eyes, and quite oblivious of what was going on about him, stopped where he was. The grey-haired old man with the flaming eyes inquired indignantly what the foreigners

had found to criticize. But the waiter, not wishing to give the game away, lied haughtily:

"The Count, who occupies the royal suite in our hotel, does not feel inclined, after such a wretched display, to stand here any longer."

"And I don't blame him either," murmured one or two within ear-shot, "the bull was a disgrace to the town."

Impelled by a sense of shame, for which he could not account, Guerra hurried down the steps at top speed. Surely he was not over-squeamish, but he could not remember any occasion in his chequered career when he had been so near crying as he had been a moment ago, and was still, when he called to mind the tormented creature's questioning eyes and the look cast across the barrier at the rows of people on the other side. Was it the bull or the crowd that he had not known?

Below he came across a short fat man with a bright-red face, who was making his way towards the exit, shouting at everyone he met: "*Je proteste énergiquement! Ce n'est pas de la civilisation!*"

To judge from his accent, he came from the north of France, and looked like a member of the lower middle class. His fat little wife was following him anxiously and trying to calm him down. When he saw Guerra, he again shouted his remarks. Guerra stood still and raised his hat.

"You are expressing exactly what I feel, Monsieur!" he said courteously. "But, you see, you and I are only two, and there are ten or twelve thousand in there."

As he spoke, he remembered what Orestes had said, but the fat man gazed at him with a look of by no means friendly astonishment and, pushing past him, made no reply. A few old women and beggars were sitting at the entrance. The fat man made towards the rue Voltaire shouting: "*Je proteste énergiquement! Ce n'est pas de la civilisation!*"

The people looked dumbfounded at each other. But a beggar, who had lost both legs and was sitting on a small low trolley on little wheels and propelling himself along the pavement

with his hands, round which the edges of his sleeves hung in rags—this black-bearded cripple alone repeated quite calmly in deep sonorous tones: "*Je proteste énergiquement!*"

Guerra passed quickly on. He felt strangely shy of his fellows whom he had suddenly ceased to understand. Why had not the fat man been pleased that he agreed with him? And was the cripple a satirist? Was he on the bull's side or against him? Or was he protesting against life in general?

With individuals, this man and that, he could always get along, and quite well too. Had he not filtered his experience and chastened his morals for seven whole years for the sake of the individual? Nevertheless he could not forget the bull, and the future loomed dark because of the crowds through whom his influence would have to work. — But his momentary weakness only stimulated him to fresh resistance. He grew angry and bit his lip. "What then? If I cannot sway a crowd so that at a word, at a sign, from me they show mercy to the bull, then I am not worth spitting on! If the revolutionary mob, which cannot be dispensed with, slips out of my control, then it will spit on me! If the masses — do I love them, then? Have I ever loved them? Did I ever love anything connected with them, beyond their common emotions and their ringing cheers, when they centred on me? When the masses see their leader soften and shed tears over the pitiful eyes of men or beasts, they laugh, hiss, and crucify. Good God! At last I have grasped this most primeval and enduring of worldly experiences! The heart never ceases to learn, and for seven years I have been polishing my behaviour and preparing myself through the great *Confessio* for the thrusts and blows of the future. But this concerns me alone, and not the masses! The hand that leads them must be hard. And if ever, owing to Fate, from which men are wont to learn their cruelties, matters should reach such a pass that the poor creature stands bleeding before the eyes of the enthralled mob, and death is the only form of mercy left, then the skilful toreador is of more worth than the sentimental whiner. And if the business has

not been fair and square, then howl, poor heart, in thy misery, and if it should not end there, then lock thyself in somewhere, thou rebel, and shoot thyself dead. — *Basta!*”

He could still hear steps behind him in the crooked alley and knew it was Orestes, whose tact would not allow him to overtake his master. And he waited, for he had now distilled his little drop of gain from the experience he had been through, and felt strong once more. The one-eyed man came slowly up to him and looked searchingly in his face.

“I don’t know,” he observed with some hesitation, “whether in our own country, where people shoot the singing birds and eat them, that things are very much better. No, they certainly are not! Our waiter, for instance, is certainly a good-natured fellow who could not hurt a fly.”

“A wretched bull, Orestes, that was the reason,” said Guerra, and walked on. The old soldier gazed thoughtfully at his master’s back.

5

The first day in Arles was remarkable, and packed with parables. Nor was it yet at an end. In front of the six-columned portals of St. Trophime Guerra turned round and discovered that Orestes was no longer following him. He was glad; for this man with his one eye had seen more deeply into his soul during the last hour than during the whole of the five years of their association, and also because for that day he felt he had had enough. Orestes too had probably had enough! “A unique creature,” he thought, “who let me take five years to discover his depths; a silent man with infinite subterranean passages, perhaps — perhaps, like Checra, a good comrade” — Guerra knew it now — capable of trudging the long road by his side. How old could he be? About fifty — not yet too old even for the long road!

He entered the Cathedral, which was empty. All the faithful were at the arena. On the right a passage led into the monastery.

An old woman, with regular features and the small black coif of the Arlésienne on her white hair, opened the door to him. The sight of the marvellous courtyard of the monastery took his breath away and made him stop short on the threshold, and he stood contemplating the sacred place, with the patch of bright sunlight on the square of lawn in the centre, and the quadrangle of sky above, mingling with the vibrant gleam of the ornate colonnade, and surrounded by graceful arches supported on double columns. At last he approached the time-worn statues, standing modest and immovable, in the niches and at the four corners. Here were St. Trophimus, Archbishop of Arles, his hairy face, with its large ears, losing none of its saintliness and perfection from the loss of its nose; St. Thomas the Apostle, and St. James of Compostella, all gaunt, angular, crumbled figures of the Sacred Faith. On every hand, even to the delicate leaf-mouldings of the capitals, the carved stone, with silent emphasis, told tales from the eternal Book, depicting the old, old scenes that are ever new and fresh and ring so forcible and true from the beginning that the hand of time can but add to their appeal.

An ancient truth was forcibly brought home to Guerra. The arena had been absorbed by the Church, with her red blood of the love-sacrifice, the lust for blood behind the tender grey warning of the legends, the pity of the reward through the *leit-motif* of Jesus' example, and hatred of the all-embracing loving-kindness of Christ. "If they only let me live when my arena is closed," he thought, "and allow me to grow old in peace, then possibly I will covet tranquillity like this above all else, and it will become a necessity of my being."

Beneath a defaced statue of the Queen of Sheba a girl of about fifteen was sitting knitting. Guerra only caught sight of her when he had reached the pilaster projecting beyond the chaste statue. Whether she had already espied him as he stood before some of the other statues or pictures, he did not know; but he soon began to wonder. The girl looked up bright-eyed and curious, and he returned her glance. Her black hair was

parted in the middle and fell in two great plaits, right and left, over her shoulders and breast. She reminded him of Maria Pia, who at the time of their idyll in Fiesole had been the same age as this child. She must now be about the age his sister Madda had been at that time. Maria Pia hated Madda! Guerra smiled. But because his eyes were turned away—or for some other reason—the girl still continued to gaze at him, not with curiosity now, but with grave expectation, letting her knitting fall into her lap.

Sweet little Maria Pia! Oh, wonderful day, after all its vicissitudes—blood, rage, sorrow, worldliness and holiness—to lead his spirit from the girl's plait under the statue of the Queen of Sheba to Maria Pia! Guerra felt grateful and sat down near the girl on the stone parapet supporting the double columns. He did not notice how close he was to her, but she did not get up or make any attempt to move nearer the Queen of Sheba. There was a happy light in Guerra's eyes as they almost rested on her. He could see the house in Borgunto, and Maria Pia, with her charming shy movements, and the miracle of her love in the midst of all the confusion, lies, and fraud of the revolutionary tumult and farce, which his memory seemed to magnify and embellish, like the gift that old Checca had made him. But Maria Pia still lived, she still lived! He had promised to pay his debt to her and thank her for all she had done. Oh, that promise made in the violent emotion of leave-taking, as she lay wide-eyed, pale, and silent in his arms, passing her hands over his brow, his eyes, his mouth, following the direction of her eyes! That promise—how little it had meant at the time! But now that he had had plenty of opportunity for thought and reflection in Elba, it had returned to his mind with ever greater force and, turning his love into the counterpart of hers, had cast a shadow over Maria Corleone and fortified him against Madda!

The girl beside him did not stir and still gazed at him. Leaning against the plinth of the columns, he was looking up into the marred features of the Queen of Sheba; but the girl knew

that his eyes were looking beyond the disfigured beauty of the statue and she waited a little longer. She had grown very pale. But the man's eyes were contemplating visions of beauty that held him spellbound — visions of the past and of the future. How could she tell? But there was certainly a woman's figure among them!

Suddenly she stood up and with a subtle and significant shrug of her shoulders showed she was offended. Guerra started; he had just caught sight of the movement, and understood it. Blushing for shame, he hurried after her. But she had vanished into the monastery through a door which had no handle.

Eventually Guerra made up his mind to leave the monastery. He was still a little confused, though full of a strange feeling of content. Perhaps it was just as well that, thanks to Maria Pia, he had forgotten the little maiden of Arles. A fresh strand of Fate might well have been woven from that little shrug of the girl's shoulders, the old, old song with all the joy in the first verse, and the sorrow in the last — for poets have an easier task than the Almighty, Who, all-powerful though He is, sometimes hesitates. Guerra was no longer a spendthrift with the lives of men. He had begun to feel qualms at the thought of the startling balance-sheet of his own life, which had been so lavish in the expenditure of other folks' lives, always to his own advantage. In all his intrigues with women on the Isle of Elba, he had always selected those who bore him no gratitude. But the little Arlésienne might have been grateful. Moreover, he had no time now for an idyll.

He was sitting in a café on the Place du Forum, opposite his hotel; six o'clock had just struck, but still there were more cats and dogs about the streets than men and women and he felt as though he had brought the peace of the monastery back with him. Suddenly the arena belched forth its crowds, which streamed noisily from every street, making the houses live again, filling the square, and driving away the cats. The dogs, less sensitive creatures, remained alert and assertive, but they

were soon swallowed up in the crowd and many were trampled underfoot.

Othello was borne along by the stream, but, separating himself from it as soon as he saw his master, he went uneasily up to him, as though it were necessary to accustom himself once more to his singularity. He gave him a strange salute, reminiscent of the matador with his sword, and, remembering Guerra's flight from the arena, hesitated before addressing him.

"Well," his master inquired, "were the others better?"

"Some of them were very wild."

"The first was surely the worst?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Bad luck!" exclaimed Guerra, ending the little duologue. Othello gazed at him with astonishment for a moment and then gave a military salute, which seemed to him the best way of putting an end to an equivocal situation, the outcome of which it was impossible to foresee. —

Shortly after the evening meal Guerra retired to his room. He was tired, and the day had been full to overflowing with fresh experiences. He had had enough for the time being. Just as he was taking off his coat, there was a knock at the door. — Was there more to come, after all? For such a day could not possibly end by a servant's knock at the door. — No! a well-dressed man stepped in; he still wore his travelling-coat and was tall and had a large nose that twitched.

"Scaleterra!" cried Guerra, embracing him.

"As a matter of fact, my name at present is Nustrini," the newcomer replied with a smile, "but that does not matter here."

The two men had not seen each other for nearly eight years. They had last met on that night in October 1830 when the memorable council of the rebel leaders had been held in the grounds of Princess Corleone's country-seat — a veritable hour of torture for the soul, thought Guerra, as he gazed pensively into the face of his subordinate. What had happened afterwards, the worthy fellow before him did not know; he knew

nothing of his conversation with Maria Corleone, which had been a sort of monologue on the part of his guilty conscience, or how, in the end, in a fit of petulance, he had shamefully betrayed the Party, and silenced his conscience beneath a flood of dialectic. On the other hand, if it were not a base betrayal, his action might have been interpreted as an attempt to guide the hand of destiny, for the Grand Duke had been saved from death in Modena. Madda had been there; at first she had thought him mad, but she had seized his meaning with terrifying rapidity. Heavens! that walk back through the night to Fiesole, with the abyss of hell yawning at their feet!— Could this man, who had been Caminer's first victim, who had been arrested on his return to Florence and had had time enough to think things over and grasp their significance— could this man possibly avoid regarding Guerra's apparent joy at their meeting with a certain justifiable suspicion?

"Fancy your being here already, my dear friend! I only arrived here today at noon."

"I received the order two days after your landing in Corsica. I was awaiting instructions in Genoa and came here at once."

Guerra contrived to give a smile, though it was somewhat forced.

"Tell me, old boy, now the Party has been reorganized, do they still make everybody spy on everybody else? You know how there used to be supervisors for the leader, and supervisors for the supervisors, *ad infinitum*. . . ."

Scaleterra still had the straightforward, intelligent, and penetrating look so disconcerting to those who harboured crooked thoughts.

"I really don't know, Gasto," he replied simply, "but I don't think so. I haven't noticed anything of the kind during my two years in Turin. The object of my journey here is to acquaint you with the present position in Italy, and outline our immediate plans. That is all, *amico*."

Guerra felt angry with himself. He had underrated the change in himself in the clumsiest manner and had revealed his

heart to this most important official in his former helpless way. But could a better day have been chosen for wiping out old scores?

"Scaleterra," he said gravely, "before we turn over a new leaf, let us close the last volume. All manner of questions still remain unsettled. We are seven years older now and have had time and reason enough for reflection, and I, for my part, have effected certain changes in my nature. — What is the upshot of your own cogitations about me and my past behaviour?"

The fleshy nostrils of the journalist's crooked nose were twitching violently — the old familiar sign of excitement and lust for battle. He had probably been waiting a long time for this hour of reckoning.

"I have come to the conclusion that you were right and acted rightly," he replied.

"From the personal or from the political point of view?"

"If you insist on separating the two, Gasto — from the political point of view. Neither the times nor the Party were ripe for revolution. The fact that you put on the brake at the right moment and chose what in the circumstances was the lesser evil of capitulation saved our machinery and plant, to put it plainly."

Guerra stepped thoughtfully up to the window and looked out at the Sunday evening scene in the square, which was thronged with happy knots of people. Lanterns shed a soft glow through the trees, without casting too fierce a light upon the strollers below. There were shadows enough for the eternal game of love, for the woman who chose to laugh and the man who chose to sing. And in the soft murmur that rose from the square that evening, the sounds of laughter and singing predominated, the most beautiful sounds mankind can make. Contrasts! Contrasts! thought Guerra — the arena, the Cathedral, and this Sunday evening in the square produced in turn nausea, reflection, and love. Three different worlds had been packed into the last six hours, and although they led to no solution, they had been alive — and what was alive was also brave!

He turned sharply round. Scaleterra looked anxiously at him, though apparently he did not think the pause unduly prolonged.

"A clean slate!" cried Guerra. "A perfectly clean slate! Away with all foolish dialectics between us! Don't separate my politics from my person any longer; don't swallow the personal blackguard in trying to approve of the politician, and don't speak of capitulation when you know perfectly well it was treachery!"

The journalist's face twitched; otherwise he was perfectly calm, as was also his reply.

"I am not certain of that, Gasto," he said.

"But hang it all, my dear fellow," cried Guerra, strangely agitated, "what did you think of me when you were being taken to the Bargello that night? Incidentally, I had ordered you to remain in Settignano, as you must remember. I merely mention this to justify myself."

"That is quite unnecessary," replied Scaleterra. "I know you were not to blame for my arrest. Your tactics at that time were directed against the Party, not against a colleague in the Party."

"Quite right, my dear fellow, and are you also aware . . ."

"I am perfectly well aware—I even said as much to myself when I was on the steps in the courtyard of the Bargello."

"What did you say to yourself?"

"*Commediante!*"

"Is that all? But that is not even remotely akin to traitor."

The two men were now talking in matter-of-fact tones. They knew that this strange cross-examination was necessary and to the point. Scaleterra stroked his chin thoughtfully.

"Not quite all," he replied, "probably not quite all. I had all kinds of other thoughts before that. The great door closed with a loud bang, and my heart beat just as loud. I was furious; my teeth were chattering." And, thumping the table with both fists, Scaleterra leant forward. "What manner of man were you, Guerra? How you played with other men's lives and

even with your own! What is Maria Corleone to you? What is your sister to you?"

Guerra sat calm and erect.

"But still you do not mention what I really did," he observed. "On that very evening, in the park of Isola, I told Maria Corleone about the proposed attempt on the Grand Duke's life and persuaded her to warn him. And later on, during the February revolution, when the Central Bureau ordered me to assassinate the Prince myself, I contrived to be taken prisoner."

"Yes," Scaleterra said with a nod, "the assassination would have constituted a wholly senseless act of terrorism."

"Do you honestly mean that?" cried Guerra excitedly.

"Yes," replied Scaleterra, "I do not regard that as an act of treachery any more than you do."

Guerra smiled.

"Quite so," he said softly. "I only thought of that hard word for the first time this evening, do you understand? For seven years I have been looking into my own heart and into the souls of all those whom I used—you know, Scaleterra, what it means to have oceans of time. One becomes a mere reflection of body and heart, God, the Devil, and the Last Judgment rolled into one—if only out of boredom. It was then that I turned my light into shady corners, recapitulated many a dark hour, examined the living and the dead, and unearthed sins which deserve more than two thumps of your fists on this table. But it was not all straightforward repentance, you understand—no, it was knowledge for its own sake, turned over and over in my mind, until at last, as I stood on that boat sailing to Corsica, I felt that not even the sole of my boot was dirty. Do you follow me, *amico*?"

He stretched out his hand across the table, and Scaleterra took it between both of his.

"Yes, Gasto," he replied, "you will be the real leader. You have made yourself worthy of trust. But enough!"

"I am coming to the end," said Guerra. "A moment ago you

were asking what Maria Corleone and my sister were to me. This question troubled you, not only in the courtyard of the Bargello; I presume it troubles you still?"

"Yes!"

"The answer is surprisingly simple, Pier Luigi! Maria Corleone is to me an old woman, and Madda is a sister, that and nothing more; whether she is obedient or disobedient, useful or not useful, it cannot matter much to me. . . ."

"Well, that settles it!" Scaleterra interrupted with some embarrassment. "People should not press each other too hard, particularly when they have reasons for trusting one another."

"Thank you," said Guerra, rising to his feet; "this day has been so rich in spoil that my neck is aching. I am a rich man; but I am tired, and you must be tired too. Let us start the new leaf tomorrow."

He was alone and began to undress. Then, putting out the light, he got into bed. Outside, the square was not yet tired, and the veil of night that had been drawn over it merely softened its murmur. At last only one man's voice could be heard; it sounded fine in the distance — *O Magali, ma tant amado*. And as sleep descended upon him, Guerra felt happy — nay, pious.

6

Arles marked the flood-tide of Guerra's period of reflection. From that moment, life began to move more rapidly, and his eyes were constantly on the alert looking ahead. He went to Genoa and Turin, his task being to discover to what extent the nobility and the middle-class *intelligenza* had been won over to the cause of Radicalism and Young Italy, and whether the enigmatic reserve of the young King of Piedmont — the revolutionary Prince of somewhat dubious credentials, whose behaviour in exile in Florence in 1821 Guerra in his young days had once been set to watch — could be regarded as anything more than a gesture in favour of the national movement and hostile to Austria. The King was no longer as important as

he had been; for there could be no doubt that the republican idea, which the new Grand Master in Paris had been flaunting in the faces of the Italian monarchs, was already beginning to gain ground, even though the latter hesitated to come to the decisive encounter. But they were animated by hope or fear, either of which was equally favourable. Beyond, on the horizon of the coming century, revolution, inevitable revolution, already loomed.

From Turin Guerra went to Milan, but stayed only two days, for the political police, who were particularly well organized there, would have regarded three days with considerable suspicion and were beginning to keep a sharp eye on the traveller. But he had seen and heard enough. Between the foreign uniforms and the natives of the place he had discerned the deep current of hatred and incompatibility, that element of strangeness which could never become merged with the habits of the people, but, according to some mysterious formula of time, shot out its roots vertically and horizontally. And he had been informed that the only link between the opposing sides consisted of the flash of pistols or the gleam of swords. It is true that little resulted from these insignificant and infrequent storms — only the death of a few unfortunate fanatics or innocents on either side. But the difference in the strength of the sides was too great, not only with regard to muskets, but also with regard to brains. A single act of violence on the part of the iron Governor led to a year's unanimous boycott on the part of the aristocracy, who, foaming with indignation, refused all orders and decorations, ostracized the Vice-regal Court, and sent their sons to the courtesans and chorus girls instead of into the crack regiments and the usual posts in the higher administrative departments of State. But all this signified as little as did the King himself in Piedmont. Moreover, both Guerra and the Central Bureau believed that the great conflagration would spread over the south, *via* Naples, Sicily, or the Papal States. The latter had already been ravaged by long and severe storms, and even cholera was on the side of the revolutionaries. Here too the

lightning had flashed from musket and sword and built a bridge of rancour between two worlds equally weak or equally strong. While in the north it was only a matter of discovering the wherewithal of conflict, the explosive material which would catch the spark. Guerra, cool and collected as a sapper, was satisfied with his tests.

In the autumn of the same year he was summoned to Paris. His two old retainers, who had been hardly less quick than himself to forget the years of idleness in Elba, and who had adopted the nomadic life as though to the manner born, had also readily assumed the dignified unapproachable bearing of good lackeys, and the air of distinction afforded by their wrinkled features had done much to lend plausibility to the part of a globe-trotting nobleman, quite indifferent to politics, which their master was called upon to play. Guerra put up at a good hotel in the rue de la Paix, where from his windows he could see the noble outlines of the Place Vendôme. As he had not been informed what the pseudonym or the address of the Chief of the Party was, he had to await further instructions in the hotel whither he had been told to repair. And, as written messages giving information and even addresses were still forbidden, he had no alternative but to remain in the room of his hotel until some official of the Central Bureau called upon him—or possibly even the Grand Master himself, if the latter actually believed that his *incognito* in Paris was a reality. Guerra thought of every possibility, and as he had been spoilt by the new tempo of the last few months, he became rather nervous. He had had no opportunity of renewing his acquaintance with the beloved city, or of enjoying his first walk through her streets from the Madeleine across the Place de la Concorde into the Champs Élysées, but had sat waiting in his hotel like an orderly, growing ever more haughty and angry.

His two old soldiers, to whom he had given leave to go into the city, came back—Othello, in particular, intoxicated by the charm of Paris and waxing enthusiastic in polished periods

and grandiloquent gestures. As he had a weakness for precious stones, his description of the jewellers' shops in the rue de la Paix soared from mere dithyrambs to monstrous strings of figures. Orestes accused him of exaggeration and declared that he himself was an old Bonapartist. Othello, who had now irrevocably embarked upon the sea of falsehood, called his forged Corsican passport to witness that he was a fellow-countryman of the Emperor, which brought back the smile to Guerra's lips. Suddenly there was a knock at the door, and a page entered with a note. Guerra tore it open, frantic with excitement. The paper was blank except for the one word: "Madda." — The page said that the lady was waiting downstairs.

"My sister!" cried Guerra, as though he felt it incumbent upon him to give an explanation. Orestes tactfully took Othello by the arm and led him out.

A prey to extreme agitation, Guerra strode to and fro before the door and at last halted at the table. — Why was he so excited? Had he not known he would meet Madda in Paris? *Sapristi*, why did he feel so excited? A gentle knock was heard. Although he could not remember her ever having knocked before gaining admittance, he recognized her by the way she knocked! What would she look like? Seven years! — He flung open the door, and Madda flew into his arms.

What did she look like? He threw back his head. She was still beautiful, very beautiful. She was smartly dressed and very much made up. But her features had grown harder — yes, they had grown harder, very much harder. Her little nose was straight, her lips were thinner, her smooth brow colder, while the two little angry bumps just above the top of her nose, which in the old days had only appeared when she was provoked, were faintly but permanently visible. And, as he examined her more closely, in and around her eyes, about her mouth, and from her chin to her neck Guerra was forced to acknowledge that she looked a little bit faded and over-ripe. But his discovery did not sadden him; on the contrary, it

filled him with a certain satisfaction, and as his excitement abated, he thrust it from him like a lie; he was vexed, just as he had been vexed at having given himself away during the first moments of his interview with Scaleterra. Madda noticed all this; she saw his look and guessed his thoughts; but she did not flinch. They exchanged their first words; but it was as though hands were being held over their mouths. To Guerra it was intolerable, and he stroked her brow and her hair.

"A clean slate," he said softly, "a clean slate, Madda, from the very beginning."

"Yes," she answered humbly, "it must be so."

He stroked her hands; he was friendly, but his friendliness was not so good as her humility, he thought. Yet he did not change his attitude; for, in the presence of this woman, he could not allow himself for one moment to be weakened again by any dark thought, or to let the recollection of her unhappy fate occupy even the smallest place in his heart.

"Seven years," he said, "seven years, Madda, must have brought healing."

"Yes," she replied, "and it has been such a long time that I have quite lost my old understanding of you—you know what I mean, Gasto. I do not mean, of course, that you have grown strange to me; but I no longer know anything about you. In the old days you could either talk to me or be silent—and I understood. But now, Gasto, I shall not be able to hear anything at all when you are dumb. Nor do I wish to. For what I can still guess of your thoughts hurts me."

Guerra shrugged his shoulders.

"I no longer know myself, as you used to know me," he said hastily. "It has been a damnably long business. We must try to accustom ourselves to dealing with new people in each other."

She smiled faintly.

"Oh, Gasto," she cried, "I am not so new as all that! In fact, I should like to be just what I used to be, and every year that passes will only make this desire stronger. And, Gasto, if I

cannot help you here, I accept everything into the bargain, even the Guerra of the old days. . . .”

The way she had gently turned the conversation did not please him, and, changing the subject somewhat abruptly to current topics, he asked her whether she was bringing him news from the Central Bureau.

“I am to take you to the *Capo*,” she replied.

“The *Capo*?” he inquired. “Is that the new title of the Grand Master?”

“Yes; he hates all the Rosicrucian jargon of the old days and is doing away with it.”

“What sort of a man is he?” Guerra inquired with some interest. “I knew him, but only very slightly, in the twenties. I think it was in Milan.”

“The *Capo*,” Madda replied, “conceals everything beneath his smooth intellect — his courage, his fanaticism, and his brutality.”

“Is that all he conceals? I am asking because he is known to have once sung an ode to humanity.”

“He has hung up his harp on a nail, Gasto, and he probably sang about what he most lacks.”

Guerra looked at her in astonishment.

“Do you know him as well as all that, Madda?”

“I know him very well, Gasto; I am living with him, at least more or less. . . .”

Guerra thrust out his chin; he was far from pleased.

“Forgive me, Madda,” he observed somewhat uneasily, “but how do you come to be acquainted, and apparently find it so easy to become acquainted, with so many men, and always men who bear a political relation to me? Even if I were degraded enough to favour such a thing, Madda —” He stopped in anguish. “Didn’t you see that, even in the case of Caminer, I refused to exploit your readiness to help in this way?”

“Yes,” she said, with a low laugh, “and that reminds me that I wanted to ask you something. . . .”

"Why I did not take flight that time in Florence? The answer is simple. . . ."

"No, no, Gasto," she whispered, and opened her eyes wide, "but why you took the red-beard away from me."

Guerra was silent.

"I have seen the red-beard break down and heard him cry," she murmured. "It was terrible, the way he howled." And casting a swift glance at her brother, she added: "And was your motive then — love?"

"Pure love," replied Guerra softly, "just as it is now."

An oppressive silence followed. Madda parted her lips slightly, but did not smile.

"If it is pure love," she observed presently, with a pronounced drawl, "then let me ask you a much more important question, which urgently requires an answer. Shall I marry the *Capo* or remain the friend of the Austrian Ambassador?"

Guerra tugged at his collar, which seemed to be throttling him.

"Why precisely today?" he asked in anguish.

"Clean slate!" she replied impulsively. And he recovered his composure instantly.

"Marry the *Capo*," he replied coldly, "you will soon be thirty."

THE CENTAUR

I

THE years rolled on towards revolution. The first thousand days were not heading directly for it; they were confused, indolent, and also indefinite as to aims. But the wind of time blew more fiercely and pointed out the directions in dust, clouds, and storms. Time set up finger-posts—ideas, words, cries, shots, and deaths. But they all pointed the same way, and the road could no longer be missed. The second thousand days were better organized and marshalled—always in the same direction, and now, as it were, moving involuntarily.

A thousand days is a long time—a thousand days, two thousand days. The years rolled in the right direction, calm, self-confident, and on a broad front. But where did the road end? Where did the revolution begin?

The signal!

Did time roll on without mankind? Was it only the matadors who were riding ahead on the leading horses, the professionals, the gladiators of patriotism, with the thoughts of all in their rear—but what about the bodies, the important bodies, inquisitive, knowledgeable, making signs, left and right on the eternal platforms?

The riders in the van—Liberals, Constitutionalists, Radicals, Secret-leaguers, rebels, and desperadoes—were beginning to grow uneasy. The body of the individual has not the deep lungs of time. After all, what is the use of dead souls on eternal horses? A strange revolution this, which swallows up generations before it makes a beginning. Poor white-haired creatures who in 1821 were not yet grey; greyheads whose hair in 1831 was black: what shall we poor riders do if this revolution requires a century to be realized!

Guerra was not uneasy and asked no questions. For Guerra was time, slowly adapting itself, maturing, riding on, and confident of life. He was as old as the Age he was riding. The rider and his horse were one. The centaur was forty years old, forty-two, forty-three. The signal had not yet been given, it still remained to be given. He, the rider in the van, knew this, and the source of movement in Paris, the *Capo*, who was of the same age, knew it also.

During the last few years there had been events enough which had looked like a signal. But all they did was to raise an empty flagstaff in the air, they did not burn, they made no sound. Then suddenly the young King of Piedmont for the first time, with clouded brow and head erect, dared to stand up against the Strong Man in Vienna, and Italy cried: "Now!" But the *Capo*, who, ever since 1821, had called the King a traitor, and had given him the popular nickname of *Re Tentenna*—*King Waverer*—knew that behind the stiff back there was the strong supporting hand of England, and he countermanded the supposed signal with the words: "No signal from the north."

Presently the *Capo* incited the south to rebellion; for there hatred of the Bourbons, the Jesuits, and the Police Minister of Naples provided better material. And Guerra, the rider in the van, mobilized a mad military rabble, armed smugglers from the Apennines, the infamous ruck and scum of Livorno, and Italian brigands from the south, while the *Capo* imported Spanish guerrilla fighters, like merino sheep, *via* Livorno, into the country—the simile was his own. The *Capo* was both malicious and intellectual, and Guerra was not particularly fond of the combination. As he was not yet able to enter Tuscany, the by no means invariably simple questions of disembarkation, transport, and recruiting were settled by agents, whilst he himself directed the southern Italian movement from Malta. Nevertheless, contrary to his express orders, a handful of desperadoes advanced much too soon on Cosenza in Calabria, and were driven back. When Guerra had objected, the

two leaders of the band, the brothers Bandiera, who had once been Austrian naval officers, produced a special order from the *Capo*. While Guerra suspended his activities in Malta and was making his way to Paris, the Bandieras and their followers made their second attempt against Calabria, but were fired upon by the civil Militia, taken prisoner, tried, and shot to a man. In other parts of the kingdom and in Sicily the civil war smouldered on, and similar bands of desperadoes were busy in the Adriatic legations of the Papal States; for there, too, the ground was already shaking under the heavy heel of the reactionary rule of the priests. Thus beacons were lighted here and there, shots were fired and men killed; but there was no signal.

Then Guerra appeared before the *Capo*. In the early years the only bonds between the two men consisted in an instinct for time, a certain mutual respect — and Madda. Otherwise they appeared to be complete opposites. Guerra reproached his brother-in-law with the special order he had given the revolutionaries in their abortive attempt under the Bandieras. The wild little man, whose hair grew low over his brow laughed.

"Let that be, Gasto," he said; "aren't they dead?"

"Executed?"

"Of course!"

"My dear fellow," said Guerra softly, drawing closer to his companion, "I refuse to help you any longer in discounting your damned bills of exchange with the executioners."

The *Capo* drew back with a smile.

"Gasto, your athlete's breast is ill suited for examinations under threat. And even if you were to thrash me, I should admire your humanitarian biceps, and refuse to be led astray. Much as I regret it, I need martyrs. Why, you yourself are a martyr, as you can see with your own eyes any day of the week."

Guerra turned pale with rage.

"Well, stop it, Mario," he exclaimed. "I am giving you good advice — you ought to be ashamed of carrying on the vile

activities of your predecessor. All these miniature insurrections are pointless!"

"I know that, my dear fellow! But how else can you keep the fire burning?"

Guerra was silent at last. He knew the *Capo's* next move and the brutal means of its achievement. The Radical disturbances throughout the country, and the increasingly strident tones of the secret press conducted by Scaleterra, which penetrated even the Quirinal and the Government offices in Turin, Milan, Florence, and Naples, through the agency of the so-called religious tract vendors and bogus monks, was bound to lead to an alliance between all the reactionary Governments under the hegemony of Vienna. The greater the contrast, the clearer the cleavage, and the heavier the pressure, the greater, clearer, and mightier must be the final signal. It was a simple calculation. Guerra knew that his brother-in-law was a political genius, whereas he himself was only a genius of revolution. Moreover, his meditations in Elba had made him fastidious regarding the means he used; and this hampered him. So he hid behind the *Capo's* stalwart conscience, while the latter turned such moments to account to harden Guerra, whose new views regarding conscience were far from pleasing to him.

"Yes, Guerra," he continued, "I shall sacrifice two thousand men if the Austrians occupy Ferrara, three thousand if the Tuscans do so, and five thousand if the Pope implores them for help."

"What a good thing it is, my dear fellow," said Guerra, "both for your own soul and for the souls of these unfortunate people, that there are some limits to your powers of sacrifice. For you have not got so very many men at your disposal."

The *Capo's* bright little eyes looked piercingly at his companion.

"No, dear brother-in-law Guerra! But you have two hundred first-class men from the Romagna, and your guard

from Livorno. So just amuse the Sanfedists of Ravenna and Rimini with them for a bit, and if possible also your Grand-ducal brother-in-law. For if the luckier among your followers ultimately escape, they should cross into Tuscan territory. That will lead to pleasant little scenes in which they will be delivered up. Who knows how long the old Pope will live and his wild legates be able to go on passing sentence? . . ." And the *Capo* gave his usual low shrill laugh. "Passing sentence, Gastino, I tell you, only means sentencing to death in eighty per cent of cases. . . ."

"Mario," cried Guerra, "I don't know how long I shall be able to tolerate your wit; it's impossible to say. But it would be a bad thing for the Cause if I were overcome with nausea again."

The *Capo* grew serious. The limit had been reached.

"Gasto," he said kindly, "my barking at you is worse than my biting of other people. And when the signal comes, you can act as you please in your Tuscany."

Madda was very seldom present at these conversations and never took any part in them. Apparently she loved her husband.

2

The signal!

The Romagna insurgents attacked Rimini. The Papal troops, ten times as strong, vigilant, and efficient, thanks to the energetic organization of the Sanfedists—the Catholic allies of Austria—had no difficulty in defeating them. There was the usual toll of dead, wounded, and prisoners—the usual military commissions, courts martial, and executions. The leader of the Romagna insurgents, a certain Renzi, took refuge with a hundred and fifty men near Forli in Tuscan territory. The Grand Duke had grown extremely nervous as he watched the fateful turn of events. The dark forebodings inspired by one aspect of his dual nature grew plainer with every breath, and he wished to yield to the pressure of

the Papal authorities and deliver over the insurgents. But Baron Caminer, who, in the last ten years, had lost much of his Bargello harshness (perhaps because he was the most intelligent man among them, thought the Prince) advised him not to drive them into neutral territory; while the aged del Monte, who was already on his death-bed, implored him with all the eloquence of his failing voice not to provoke the country by delivering up the rebels. The Grand Duke gave in. Renzi and the hundred and fifty men were put on board ship at Livorno and sent to France, under the usual threat that any one of them who should dare to enter Tuscan territory again would be arrested and handed over.

But this was not a signal. It had not even added appreciably to the fury of the movement. From Marseilles Renzi went to Genoa, Guerra's headquarters, and Guerra advised him to return to Marseilles and vanish into one of the low lodging-houses in the neighbourhood of the harbour. But a telegram arrived summoning Renzi to Paris and definitely bidding him come alone, without Guerra. He had the eyes of a sick dog when he left. He dreaded death as a punishment; to meet death in an adventure would have been a very different matter. So he obeyed without hesitation, and Guerra, who knew the *Capo* and had a profound understanding of men like Renzi, said not a word to detain him. But the old soldiers spent a trying day with him.

A fortnight later Renzi appeared on the Piazza del Granduca in Florence and, shouting at the top of his voice, waved a green, white, and red flag. He not only shouted: "Long live United Italy," and "Long live Independent Italy!" as he had been told to do, but he also yelled: "Long live Guerra!" This caused some sensation. The Grand Duke heard about it from Baron Caminer, who passed on the news with the ghost of a smile—an enigmatic smile, observed the Grand Duke as he thought things over. And Maria Corleone heard of it from the Grand Duke, who quite unconsciously gave the same enigmatic ghost of a smile as the Bargello. Maria Corleone

looked at him, and the Prince suddenly remembered that she was as old as the evil year itself — forty-five. "She looks wonderfully well for her age," he thought.

"Why should he not wish Guerra to live?" Maria Corleone asked with faint hostility. "But you won't hand the fellow over, will you?"

"Certainly I shall," replied the Grand Duke, tugging at his grey side-whiskers.

Renzi was delivered up to the Papal authorities on condition that he should not be put to death, and was sentenced to penal servitude for life. On the way to the penal settlement one of the military escort on board accidentally let his musket go off and killed the prisoner — at least such was the careful wording of the report. But even this was not a signal, although a fresh wave of hatred and indignation passed over the land. From Turin Scaletterra flung accusations and challenges in words of flame all over the kingdom. The *Capo* wrote a card to Guerra, bearing the one word "*Voilà!*" — nothing more.

Del Monte, the Tuscan Prime Minister, died at the age of ninety. — "Is he the signal?" the Grand Duke asked himself, as he gazed at the pinched waxen face that had become so small on the pillow. The only thing that distinguished it from the living face it had been a moment previously was the silk cloth supporting the chin, which by some curious freak seemed to have changed the sex of the corpse. The wax mask on the pillow, which for days had not moved its eyelids, might well have belonged to a very old woman, the grandam of noble virtues.

"The Myth is dead," observed the Grand Duke in low anxious tones, "an important Myth."

"Yes," replied Caminer, who was with him, "and the saddest feature of this day may be my presence here."

The Prince looked at the ruddy man, who had borne the tragic hatred of that waxen dead face as light-heartedly as if it had been a pale moonbeam.

"That is the finest funeral oration that will be pronounced over him, Caminer, and is uttered by the Myth that succeeds him."

The Bargello started in alarm.

"In Heaven's name, your Highness, don't allow that! I am the most obvious symbol for the signal!"

"Who, then?" the Prince inquired wearily.

"You must—your Highness, you must preserve the old attitude, and the old formula and the prestige of rank and person, even if such things are somewhat played out."

The Grand Duke pondered a moment with his hand before his eyes, as though he wanted to shut out both the living and the dead.

"The blind fellow?" he asked.

"Yes, very good."

And they went back to the carriage.

"It seems to me," groaned the Prince, "that the future is just as terrible as for the last twenty years it seemed to the old man who is now at peace. And I can live yet another twenty years, Caminer. What of the future?"

Caminer shrugged his shoulders. The Prince was not in the habit of complaining in his presence, or of asking such difficult questions, and the emotions he had just shown made him feel embarrassed. He felt much more at his ease in opposition, for which life had qualified him.

"The future means war," he replied truculently. "Your Highness knows the device."

He was referring to one of the best-known slogans of the secret press, which made great capital out of the play on Guerra's name. Guerra—War! And there were innumerable variations.—

Guerra too regarded the death of the old man as the signal. Owing to the curious, or rather innate, regard of the Tuscans for dignity and style, del Monte, who for fifty years had resided in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, was sacrosanct in the eyes of the people whom he never loved and hardly knew.

It had been imperative for the life of this great gentleman, which seemed at once noble and immortal, like the mighty building in which he worked, to remain conspicuous in the public eye as it had been for generations. And the form of government such a man served seemed to stand as little in need of change as he did himself. When del Monte retired after the events of 1831, or rather was induced to resign, owing to certain personal experiences of the Prince, with which he was connected, the resentment in the country had been stronger than at any time during the period of political unrest that had just terminated. This opportunity, which he had hardly suspected, and its deeper meaning made the Grand Duke recall his Prime Minister a few months later and induced the latter to accept office again. And, during the last few years, even the hostility of the Age seemed to have gone out of its way to spare the old man. The Radical press never attacked him, but charged past him against the Bargello. And when his last lingering illness began, that same press was intelligent enough to belaud his personality and to credit his worn-out heart with being animated by secret leanings towards the cause of Italian Independence.

Guerra was waiting in a state of extreme excitement in Genoa. It was an open secret that Caminer, the most powerful and efficient and best-hated man in the State, would succeed del Monte. Moreover, as Guerra had heard from his sister, a police dictatorship had long been the object of Caminer's ambition. Guerra had ordered his troops in Livorno to hold themselves in readiness, and the boat which was to convey him to Tuscany was lying under steam near Sestri Levanti. Othello, who was as agitated as his master, brought the telegram from Livorno. Guerra tore it open.

"Clever," he murmured in astonishment, "the Prince is extremely clever. . . . Caminer has not been made Prime Minister," he informed his two old retainers. Whereupon Othello drove over to Sestri, and the launch steamed back to Livorno without the leader.

The man who had been appointed Prime Minister of Tuscany was the famous blind nobleman, the bearer of one of the oldest names in Florence, and the pivot of the aristocratic *intelligenza*, a scholar and philanthropist, a Liberal from humanitarian motives, anti-Austrian, and, as everybody was well aware, by no means *persona grata* with the sovereign — the man whom for twenty years the Party had tried in vain to enroll among its members, and at the mention of whose name every Florentine metaphorically raised his hat.

On the following day Guerra received a card from the *Capo* bearing the one contemptuous word: "*Gratulor*"!

3

Thus it was not this death-bed, but another that was destined to give the signal — a strange, unexpected, and equivocal signal for the outbreak of the revolution. And all who were looking in another direction almost missed it.

On the morning of Whit Monday, the 1st of June 1846, which was a sweltering day, the Pope died. The Cardinal of the Bedchamber tapped his brow, called his name three times, and then broke the Fisherman's ring.

It was as miserable a death as could have overtaken one of the most fanatical and ineffective men of the last few years. Cancer, which his German Physician-in-ordinary had managed to combat until he was eighty-one, had conquered at last. This death too had been long and lingering, but, unlike that of the old Florentine, it had not been reverently concealed from the outside world, from his people and from prying, questioning eyes; it had been horribly naked and lonely. Nobody had loved the Pope, for, like a true Bishop of the Church Militant, he had always behaved as though he were devoid of love. The Cardinals and legates of his party exploited the theological uprightness of his intolerance for their own reactionary political ends. Yet he was not incapable of

love; and when, hemmed in by the *Sacro Ufficio* of his own doctrines, he could find no other object for his affection, he lavished it upon his Groom of the Chamber, a repulsive creature named Gaetano, who had gradually become the only avenue to the spiritual and temporal favours of the Holy Father. When he lay upon his death-bed, his party had something better to do than to keep watch beside him; they had to nurse the Conclave politically. Gaetano was the rat who, fat and bloated, left the sinking ship, for the non-political reason that he did not wish to drown or be killed. Thus the only sound that broke the silence of the death-chamber was the tramp of the Swiss Guard marching up and down before the door, and the murmurs from the stately bed, threats, groans, prayers, and perhaps requests for bread. It was said that he died hungry, for when his stomach was opened, only two lemon pips were found inside it.

The situation seemed the same as it had been fifteen years previously, when the opposing camps had only been waiting for the election of this Ultramontane General of the Camaldolensians to start their hand-to-hand fighting. All the circumstances seemed similar, but the consequences promised to be more serious. It did not require much ingenuity to see that the dominant reactionary party would have no reason to withdraw, and that they possessed the future Pope in their stern leader, the Cardinal Secretary of State. So obvious was the parallel with 1831 that attack and defence were already organized during the sitting of the Conclave. Both camps were sounding the call to arms; Guerra's legendary launch lay under steam at Sestri, and the Sanfedists, who had started making cartridges while the Holy Father was still lying on his death-bed, terrorized any doctor in Bologna and Rimini if he had patients who refused the Sacrament or were of the Hebrew Faith. The army of spies was still too small for denunciations on a grand scale, the best-drilled judicial commissions broke down under the mass of incriminating evidence, the Papal authorities sent their most dreaded, cruellest,

and most corruptible of prelates to the Legations as Commissioner Extraordinary, and Colonel Allegrini, the detested President of the Courts Martial, was stabbed to death. Meanwhile the Strong Man in Vienna and the *Capo* in Paris began to rub their hands—any intervention would have to face the guns of St. Angelo.

But the passing years had evolved a very different program from that upon which the paltry attempt of 1831 had been based. The centaur in Genoa alone, enlightened by the appointment of the new Prime Minister in Florence, shrewdly suspected that his launch would again steam back empty to Livorno, and was neither disturbed nor provoked by the premonition of unexpected occurrences; for, in spite of everything, he knew that the signal would soon be given. He was full of a feeling of confidence, though loath to indulge in any over-sanguine hopes, such as the choice of a reactionary Pope might encourage; for, in the end, nothing could alter the old balance of forces and the old strategy. But he wanted the revolution to be as inevitable and undeniable as its years of preparation warranted. On the 13th of June, the day on which the Conclave opened its sitting in the Quirinal, he wrote the following extraordinary note to the *Capo*: "My dear friend, a vague but by no means infelicitous impulse prompts me to wish you luck and the strength to exert your brains to the utmost if the fifty-one old Romans begin seeking an ally for you today." The *Capo*, with a grave face, went to Madda and gave her the note written in the heavy round hand, which might have been that of a *condottiere* who was at once monk and lyric poet. Madda read it and nodded. The *Capo*, who was brutally frank with his wife—in his case this was a sign of love—took the note back, examined it as though it were a picture, and observed slowly

"As long as he does not suspect how terrified I am of him, all is well."

"Yes," murmured Madda indistinctly. Since her marriage she had been reluctant to discuss her brother. What she had

to say about him — and that was a great deal; everything, in fact — had all been said before.

In dealing with the *Capo*, every confession had partaken of the nature of a caress, full of sensual appeal. He looked at her with his impelling glance, which filled her with exquisite joy.

"Guerra has the devil's own luck, you know. He is a Fortunatus of the underworld."

"He certainly was once," replied Madda. "But now he is setting up a ladder to heaven."

"He is known to have some sympathy with climbers of that sort," said the *Capo*. "The only people he hates are those who are coming the other way, those who are coming down."

Before he had turned rebel the *Capo* had intended to become a Carthusian. Madda spoke no word of sympathy; it was not her nature to do so and he did not expect it.

"Even if he throws the ladder down, he still shows his sympathy," she observed. He shook his head.

"I don't believe that. But I am superstitious. If our Age has the evil eye, Guerra is the amulet. If he yearns after humanity, he balances our inhumanity. If he remains clean, he washes away the spots from us. At least, that is my firm conviction."

"Yes," replied Madda softly.

"We must stick to him!" cried the *Capo*, as though she were hostile to the idea. She was silent and turned pale. He thrust his hands into his pockets, bowed his head, and bit his lip.

"Has he ever touched you?" he inquired at last.

"No," she replied unhesitatingly, "even in those days he was cleaner than I was."

"Have you got over it now?"

"No! But that is my affair."

The *Capo* read Guerra's note. — "If he is right," he thought, "we must lose no time in turning to Rome." —

The Conclave was surprisingly short. The fierce June sun

made the prelates' cells insufferably hot, and they were accustomed to their cool palaces. But the political ground under their feet was also burning. Within three days it was already known that the smallest of the three Papal robes had been ordered for the ceremony of presenting the newly elected Pope. It could not be wanted for the tall Cardinal Secretary of State, nor for the second candidate, the portly General of the Capuchins, the most popular of the Cardinals, who had a beard like that of Moses, was as democratic as a Jacobin, and as absolute as Sixtus V — at least, so thought the people of Rome who wanted him. The robe could be required only for a short man belonging to the party of reform, possibly for the moderate Legate of Forli, possibly for him who was surnamed "the Good," the gentle little Bishop of Imola, "the Smiler."

Early on the 17th of June the sun beat down unmercifully on the people who, calm and dignified, as the Romans usually are at solemn moments, were waiting on the Monte Cavallo. The partition which, during the sitting of the Conclave, shut off the centre balcony of the Quirinal, was pulled aside and the Holy Chair soared above the heads of the Court. The new Pope rose to his feet, his name was called aloud — Pio Nono — and, stretching out his arms north, south, east, and west, towards heaven, he took his seat and blessed the kneeling multitude. The Canon of St. Angelo and the bells of Rome proclaimed the election of the gentle little Bishop of Imola, the Smiler, who had been surnamed the "Good" — poet and musician, soft until his conscience spoke, then as hard as stone, tenacious, passive, amenable, liberal, ready to reform, and only forty-five years old. His name had been Giovanni Maria Mastai.

His election and the victory of the anti-reactionary and anti-Austrian reform Party seemed of tremendous significance. And yet people knew very little about the new Pope, beyond the fact that he was lovable. But to the infinitely generous soul of the Italian people, this sufficed to make them believe him capable of greatness. For by one single wise and wonder-

ful word the Pope showed what he was and in a trice was known and understood by every heart. His first public utterance was the one word "amnesty." Exactly a month after his election the decree was promulgated liberating all political criminals and those charged with political crimes — one and all without exception, those who had been cautioned, those who had been imprisoned, those who were serving life sentences, and those condemned to death. The only exceptions were officials of the Papal Court who had been compromised or convicted. In Rome people embraced each other in the street, and the astute Minister in Paris did not omit to send congratulatory telegrams and kind messages through the Ambassador. The Strong Man in Vienna, who saw many shadows looming ahead, forbade his representative in Rome to take part in the amnesty celebrations and proceeded to correspond through devious channels with the Sanfedists in the Legations and directly with the Iron Marshal in Milan.

The transition from the politics of the Papal States to Italian politics, from the position of a Catholic idol to that of a national idol, and from the rôle of a popularly acclaimed saint to that of the great leader who was wanted, was very short, dangerously short for the Pope — merely a step, a side-slip. The Smiler himself did not know how it came about. Cautiously raising his eyes, he found a piece of tricoloured ribbon in his tiara, a blasphemous emblem in such a place, the political caricature of a halo, not demanded and not revered. Friends and foes alike urged him to take a strong line, for which he had brought with him no better weapon than the most superfluous and least suitable one of kindness and goodness. France congratulated him on the "auspicious beginnings of a great pontificate"; Austria strengthened the garrisons in Lombardo-Venetia; England girded up the loins of Piedmont and sent a famous peer to the Quirinal as a guest. In the midst of all these great political Powers the little Bishop was like holy St. Francis among the beasts of prey. In his gentle way he made himself familiar with them and adopted the right

attitude, being not so much a man of courage as one who was no coward. As for the tricoloured emblem, despite his detestation of falsehood, he pretended to be colour-blind. And thus he advanced further along the road that opened before him, not too fast with his tender little feet, but smiling and ingenuous as a child. And as he was no fool, he soon learnt how eagerly universal history, of which his life now formed a part, demands some sort of mastery from its principal actors, some sort of special endowment for the sake of spiritual equilibrium—heroic deeds or their semblance, fidelity or its gestures, falsehood, shrewdness, brutality, and, above all, unscrupulousness. As he had not sufficient of any of these things to be master in any one of them, he dipped his hand, as it were, gropingly into his heart and withdrew a mastery in simplicity. He smiled. He had his magic hood. There were endless festivals, legislative commissions, and reform after reform, following hard upon the new Radical slogan, "Liberty and Religion." And the Liberals and numbers of Radicals joined this new national-democratic Church Party; there were Pius hymns and Pius myths in every corner of the globe; and Nono smiled. An Austro-Jesuitic-Sanfedist-reactionary party was formed; bloody encounters and assassinations occurred in the Legations; there were rumours of possible intervention on the part of Austria and of an alleged Sanfedist conspiracy in Rome for seizing the person of the Pope and massacring the Liberals; all unpopular characters were unscrupulously persecuted whether they were conspirators or not, while there was a general hunting down of all members of the reactionary party, guilty or not guilty. Then followed the inevitable turning of tables on the persecutors—the murder of Sanfedist leaders, imprisonments, the formation of a civil militia in all the Papal States; the great words "National Independence" were hurled by the Secretary of State in Rome against Austria, and an offer of alliance came from Piedmont, which had suddenly made up its mind to make a bold bid for the whole kingdom, win or lose. But the Smiler remained unperturbed,

childlike, deaf in one ear, very much alert in the other, seemingly more feeble and timid than ever, but taking no false step amid the turmoil, and at bottom enigmatical.

On August the 11th 1847 the Austrian garrison of the citadel occupied the town of Ferrara. And lo, the great loathing now burst its dams. People were able to shout to their hearts' content what lay on the tips of their tongues. High and low! Pius and war! — War meant Guerra! Guerra was already on his legendary launch between Sestri and Livorno. In the neighbourhood of Spezia, strange to say, he was sea-sick, although the sea was not rough. But the unaccustomed smells and the vibration of the steamer, the harassing time he had been through, or his natural excitement, may have been sufficient to account for it. At all events, the four men constituting the ship's crew resolved to keep to themselves the fact, which allowed of an unfavourable interpretation.

Guerra had come from Paris, whither he had been summoned. There was no longer much secrecy about the Party there. The *Capo's* luxurious apartments near the Madeleine had become at once a political *salon* and an additional information-bureau for Italian affairs; while the *Capo* himself had developed into a sort of Ambassador Extraordinary. The French Minister for Foreign Affairs was a not infrequent guest, and his Italian reporter was constantly there. The *Capo*, somewhat perturbed by the Pope's successes and the defection of Radicals to the Roman camp, was working hard at the formation of a Franco-Italian alliance, which in certain circumstances might become a barrier to the hegemony of the new Papal States. But as he had been informed from a reliable source that the French monarchy stood on a much weaker foundation than the Austrian, he was also negotiating with the chief actors of the morrow. When Guerra entered, ushered, in by a butler in evening dress (an innovation), he found the *Capo* arm in arm with the most grandiloquent of French poets, who had sacrificed his poetry to a Parliamentary career and was so ambitious and possessed such dazzling eloquence

that he imagined he held the spellbound Chamber in the hollow of his hand. To add further lustre to his great name and future he had recently published a most successful history of the Girondists. He was a handsome well-groomed man, bowed beneath the weight of premature undying fame, a legendary hero through the millions that had already passed through his spendthrift hands, and tragic through the hammer of the auctioneer, who rapped over all his property like a wood-worm. He and Guerra shook hands and liked each other.

"You are meeting a future Minister," remarked the *Capo* with a certain satisfaction, not devoid of the resentment which the little man feels towards the big one.

"As for you, dear friend," observed the Great Man, turning towards him, "you are too artful for me, with your Janus head, wearing a crown or a Jacobin's cap as occasion requires. Ever since 1789 Europe has been faced by two perfectly plain alternatives. I, as you know, have made my choice. But one of your halves will receive such a blow that in the most favourable circumstances it will lose its senses and be trampled down by your personal victory."

"If it is victory, it does not matter," the *Capo* retorted with a smile, "and you old countries find things easy with your 'either—or.' But we are young, we have no history and are still in a state of flux, so that at the present moment I am actually wearing the third of a tiara. Our objective is a united country, not any particular form of government. How could we alter the ordinary sequence of systems? It is surely a matter of complete indifference to us under what emblem our people march. The main consideration is that they should march."

The Great Man raised an arm.

"And they will march in Austria too!" he cried. "Your people, on the march, ought to make a great clearance!"

"Splendid, splendid, citizen Vicomte!" rejoined the *Capo*, laughing heartily. "But your European revolutionary system has not yet broken down. I should be quite pleased if it were

to do so, but I don't believe it will. The people will march in Paris, Berlin, and Vienna. You may know how things stand with you. But in Berlin and Vienna the opponents—you forget, *mon député*, that there are such things as opponents and that for every rebel fire-arm there is a loyal musket—in Berlin and Vienna, if all goes well, the opponents will first say Yes and shoot and then say No; and if the worst comes to the worst, they will simply shoot without saying a word and won't even need to open their mouths to say No!”

Guerra started in alarm and glanced angrily at his brother-in-law. He had almost forgotten what it was to feel alarmed like this—alarmed by his doubts regarding the meaning of his Age. How could the *Capo* by merely juggling with geographical terms outline such a terrifying development and continue working for its realization? How could he speak like this just when they were on the point of discounting the long bill of exchange on the meaning of their lives? The Great Man, scenting the ally, turned to the silent visitor.

“And what about you, Monsieur Guerra, you with your wonderfully single-minded life, which, if I live to see the ultimate triumph it deserves, I should like to enshrine in an epic on our common fight for the coming generation—do you say yea and amen to such a disdainful treatment of history?”

“I cannot,” replied Guerra softly, “I dare not believe that we are living in vain.”

The *Capo* listened.

“Why did you let yourself go like that, you fool?” he exclaimed rudely as soon as they were alone. “Don't you even understand why we have to let that other fool come here as he does? Because if in ten months' or a year's time I were to ask him whether he was going to be President of the French Republic, or Louis Napoleon, Emperor of the French, the fool would answer: ‘I am so wonderful that I might even be Emperor myself.’”

Guerra's brow flushed.

“A fool and another fool, Mario?” he asked with a drawl.

"Have I looked so often in the glass in your presence that your sharp eyes and tortuous brain at last saw the reflection of the little Florentine popular Duke? And as you happen to be with me now, out with all your rubbishy thoughts!"

The *Capo* did not laugh.

"You have made a little too much of my reference to two fools, Gasto," he replied calmly. "I was only having a hit at the poet of the Girondists, who is unlikely to be either President or Emperor before he dies, but merely a peer of this realm. I do not suspect you of dynastic ambitions." Then looking up, he added: "On the contrary, I should be more inclined to suspect you of being tempted to support the existing dynasty longer than necessary. Personal sympathy and personal destiny have nothing to do with ultimate necessity."

"I have no reason for sentimentality of any sort," replied Guerra.

"Really not?" the *Capo* inquired, searching his face. "So much the better! And it will be all the better for him, as you know, when he takes off his Austrian shirt and joins in the War of Liberation against his family. Then he may even have a chance of becoming the national King. For history often has a sense of humour. And should the Pope and Tentenna ever fall out, or in the end have the courage to desert, he would be forced to be a grinning third party, even if he were left in a howling wilderness."

"The cloth of the Italian uniform on his bare skin might irritate him," Guerra observed with a smile; "he is sensitive."

"Then Maria Corleone would make him a national shirt and you would slip it on him. And if, as would be only natural and becoming, he was annoyed, then you could keep the shirt and fling him away!"

Silence! Guerra was thinking of the strange fears he had had a little while back. The *Capo*, who was looking at him, closed his eyes.

"And what if he should return," Guerra asked at last, "behind a victorious white-robed Royal and Imperial General?"

"Then we should have to run away and begin again from the beginning—we have grown used to that."

"Not I!" cried Guerra. "Never again!"

"In that case you would have to make the best of a bad job when you were standing with your back to the wall in the courtyard of the Bargello, and shout: '*A basso l'Austria!*' or something to that effect when the squad levelled their muskets at you."

Guerra stared at him.

"Do you believe that?" he began softly, but his voice grew louder as he proceeded. "Do you really believe that our Age would consent to it—our Age—my Age—a barbaric salvo—and that it would double up and bite its own tail—and I should have died for nothing?"

The *Capo* surveyed him calmly.

"No, I don't believe it, not for one moment! Not a single day of our lives is in vain, not one step, one thought, one day of death—and no Age ever bends round in a circle. I am much more inclined to believe that we shall see the goal yet; but I am not obsessed with my own life as you are, Gasto; I don't take myself as seriously as you do, I don't make myself into the fetish of a whole nation's fate. And it is because things may become dangerous that I arranged for this distressing interview to take place. And though you may upbraid me as a bad dialectician, which to my sorrow I confess myself to be, I must now ask you once again—are you not upholding the Grand Duke longer than is necessary? When necessity demands, Gasto, I do not understand the safeguarding of one's own life."

Guerra rose and smilingly held out his hand to his brother-in-law.

"Mario, you make it damnably difficult for me to love you," he said. "That is the conclusion I have reached today and I shall say good-bye. Is that sufficient explanation?"

"Yes," replied the *Capo* curtly, and nodded. "And one thing more—do you want Madda?"

Guerra recoiled as though he were dodging a blow. "No!" he exclaimed.

"H'm!" muttered the *Capo*, stroking his chin and looking down at the floor. "I meant on Caminer's account; I thought — isn't that so? — you might then have, so to speak . . . but just as you like. I will call her in anyway."

He left the room. — "How he has flung my declaration of love back in my teeth," thought Guerra. "How like him!" — Madda entered.

"So you are going away again at once?" she inquired. Guerra glanced towards the door.

"Yes," he replied. "I want to be in Livorno in four days' time. — Where's Mario?"

"He's dictating a few letters. He'll be here in a moment."

Guerra scrutinized her. These scrutinies of her person were the sad, strange sequel of their parted lives. Whenever he met her he scrutinized her. He could not help it. Her face did not look much older, but it seemed to grow harder, ever harder. Her body did not seem to have been touched by the hand of time, but remained virginal.

"Thirty-eight," she said with a grimace. "Yes, that's what I am."

"Your husband is often a puzzle to me," he observed, taking no notice of what she had said. "He might surely have dictated those letters at some other time."

"I prefer his strange behaviour to your brutality, Gasto," she said sadly. "What have I done to you?"

Guerra shook his head.

"Not brutality," he replied, deeply moved, "but in any case I am mistaken about you too. Is it really true that you were going with me to Tuscany?"

"Of course!"

"On Caminer's account?" he asked, repeating the *Capo's* formal words. She was strangely embarrassed.

"It is probably not true," she said softly, "you see it yourself. Perhaps it would serve no purpose. At the end of twelve or

thirteen years the only thing about a woman that is worth anything is the recollection of her. In his way the *Capo* likes to flatter me."

"What are you two people . . . ?" Guerra muttered in horror. The *Capo* entered.

"Is Madda going with you?" he asked. Guerra seized him by the shoulders.

"If our conversation had not already taken another turn, I should box your ears," he said.

The *Capo* laughed. Madda went out and, flinging herself on her bed, began to be shaken by invisible hands, slowly at first, then gradually faster and faster. As she seldom cried, the tears came with difficulty and stung, burnt, and cut into her skin. After a while she sprang from the bed, as if impelled by some resolve, and rushed out. Her husband was at his writing-table. Guerra had already gone.

"Hearty congratulations!" cried the *Capo*, still busy writing.

"And what if I should never see him again!" she cried. He raised his head, an answer on his lips, and looked at her. As he did so, he forgot what he was going to say. She shut the door, bit her lip, and, pale from his glance, ran back to her room and looked in the mirror.

4

There were rebels too among the towns. Ghent, Marseilles, and Barcelona still had the rhythm of old insurrections in their blood. In every land, in every province, there was some town which a dark spring from the infernal regions fed with contradiction, anger, violence, pugnacity, and love of disorder.

Livorno had produced rebellious spirits from time immemorial. Dragged from the mire by the Medici, strong, efficient, and important, owing to the sea's tragic betrayal of Pisa, it had always provided a callous example of the right to live through the gradual death of a neighbour and was inevitably

somewhat upscrupulous, tasteless, and unemotional. The port of Livorno was the market for Russian grain and English colonial produce, and a rendezvous for all the blackguards of the Mediterranean. The town itself, young, clean, and flourishing, was governed by cool-headed clever business-men, bankers, and lawyers. The family of Guerra, which was of patrician rank, was typical of the town in its general attitude of mind and capacity for development. All those outside the patrician circle, who mixed with the foreign desperadoes — Levantines, natives of the Barbary States, Asiatics, and the whole crowd of brigands from Stamboul to Cadiz, whose common idiom was a corrupt form of Italian — constituted the proletariat of Livorno, a daring mob with adventurous eyes and cunning brains, Radicals by temperament and birth and first-class troops for any revolution. They formed Guerra's regiment of guards.

"The moment will inevitably come," Guerra had once observed, "when I shall want to be rid of these creatures, who are fit only for menacing demonstrations and attack, and they will refuse to go. What then?"

"Let them be massacred shortly beforehand by the Austrians," the *Capo* had replied. Raising his eyebrows, Guerra had silently left the room. In the end he avoided asking the *Capo* his opinion, feeling sure it would be rabid and a painful mixture of seriousness and banter.

Nevertheless he had no affection for his guards. Except for a few subalterns and the members of small bodies of troops which had been used in insurrections outside Tuscany, he knew them only as a mass and not as individuals. He had a far higher opinion of the less daring and even timid, sceptical, and ungrateful masses of Florence, because they had more stability, and it was precisely the lukewarm response of this city of static beauty which constituted one of the disappointments of his life. But the guards of Livorno, owing to twenty years of whispering rumour, song, and tumult, about his person, were naturally fascinated, and, with the powerful

instinct of the marching masses for the leader, loved the invisible, Messianic demigod that had been promised them, particularly as he was a fellow-countryman. Moreover, did not the accelerated rhythm and increasingly victorious tone of the last weeks seem to have been conjured into being by his magic baton? The section commander of Livorno and Guerra's liaison officer, a man named Menozzi, who had once been a Capuchin monk, and whose principal assets were an athlete's figure and a voice of thunder, possessed the gifts of a popular orator and cleverly traced every happy event to the genius of the people's idol, overcoming all complications and inconsistencies by simply shouting. Livorno believed that it was Guerra who had given the signals in Rome, and it was in his name that the voice of Livorno rose above every other in the land and by its shouts secured the prompt acceptance of every reform in Rome—the abolition of the censorship, the recognition of public demonstrations as a legal form of protest, and the institution of the Roman State Council, a sort of pre-constitutional Council of State. And now that Austria had thrown down the gauntlet in Ferrara, the whole chorus of national demands burst into loud song—the formation of a civil militia, change of Government, a constitution, war, Guerra! There could be no doubt that what they wanted first and foremost was the leader; the actual conflict was a secondary consideration. But Guerra was coming! Woe to the *carabinieri* who tore down one of the countless placards, or who disturbed the arrangements for the welcome! The whole town, the whole country, knew that Guerra was coming!

The tragedy of the Grand Duke was that, as a man now growing old, with a clean conscience and dignity unimpaired, he was doomed to see his once surprisingly secure position decaying more rapidly than his own body, which was still quite sound. But this tragedy had not yet been felt by the outside world, though its immediate effect was to isolate him amid the convulsed activities of his State and to promote the uncertainty of his policy both at home and abroad. His sudden severity,

which in itself was comprehensible enough, owing to the colossal difficulties of his position as a man, was discountenanced by his clear-headed Nationalist Prime Minister, the blind nobleman, and by Caminer himself, whose recently acquired prudence had made him something more than an enigma. As the Prince was too clever not to understand the soundness of their reasons, he relapsed into a mood of disgruntled resignation, which to the outside world resembled glacial calm. It required all his self-discipline not to break down between the stern letters of the Strong Man of Vienna, reminding him of his relationship to the Imperial household and insisting on his implicit obedience, and the murderous reforms of the Smiler in Rome. He had not been able to sleep since the occupation of Ferrara. And when his rage got the better of him and could find no outlet, he would thump his writing-table so hard that the glass balls in his inkstand scattered terrified in all directions. But nobody ever saw this happen, and with an effort he would force himself to his feet and pick them up.

What a calamity! Guerra was coming to the country!

"Have things reached such a pass," he demanded between clenched teeth, "that we are no longer in a position to arrest a condemned political offender and escaped convict?"

"Yes, your Highness, they have," was Caminer's perfectly calm reply. The fingers of the blind Minister, who was sitting in an easy chair beside the red-haired man, groped for the arm that led him about; and he raised a face, whose pale, wan features and ever-closed eyes gave it the strangely haughty expression so often to be seen on recumbent figures on tombs. He looked as though he were confused by the world about him, and stood up.

This silent termination of the interview was offensive.

"I suppose I may be allowed to ask for your advice, your Excellency?" asked the Prince sharply.

"Grant him a free pardon, your Highness," replied the blind man with gentle subtlety; "then we shall not make ourselves

look ridiculous, and at the same time we shall deprive the enemy of some of their fuel."

"No!" was the Grand Duke's unhesitating reply.

"Strange!" observed Caminer. "In 1831 I was not allowed to shoot him. The law of sympathy seems strangely short-lived."

"Pray shoot now!" cried the Prince irritably.

"It would be too expensive," objected Caminer, smiling behind his beard. "That shot would cost a throne."

That evening Maria Corleone waited in silence for a long time. At last, as the Grand Duke still said nothing, she asked:

"Is Guerra coming?"

He bowed his haggard face and did not reply, though his lips quivered. Maria Corleone was startled, and bent over him.

5

The legendary launch steamed slowly into the inner harbour. It was a small vessel, begrimed and shabby as a collier. A tricolour, already black with soot, floated at the stern. Right in the forefront, on a table which had been pushed into the bows, stood Guerra, pale and bare-headed. As the table could not be seen, he looked like a giant. All round him black boats were pitching and tossing on the water, full of his supporters cheering loudly. The sirens from factories, steamers, and sailing-vessels — some of their own accord, but not a few from fear of sabotage — hooted, whistled, and blew. A roar went up from the densely thronged quays. There was not a single customs or police boat to be seen. On the landing-stage Guerra's guards, the rebel assault detachment, were paraded with almost military precision — bare-necked men in blouses, with tri-coloured armlets, their left hands in their trousers-pockets, grasping their weapons, and their left arms beating time to the cheers. Guerra stiffened to stone, in face of the ear-splitting inferno. But this forced him to assume the expression best

fitting the occasion — stony, impenetrable, the angle of the lower jaw sharply outlined, his iron-grey locks ruffled by the wind, his chin held high, and his mouth a single stern line. Behold the Great Man, the Fighter, Patriot, and Martyr, canonized by thirty years of sacred and perilous service — a man accustomed to ovations!

But he was not accustomed to ovations! He was dazed, and his magnificent attitude, to which at the moment he gave not a thought, was the result of long practice, or possibly it was merely the old traditional gift with which the Mediterranean endows her sons. He was no longer accustomed to vast crowds, to moments of tense excitement and being the cynosure of all eyes, the centre of attraction, and the object of so much shouting and expectation. His brain was perforated like a sieve by the steel dart of his own dangerous name; it was no longer able to grasp anything, it drifted towards associations — Guerra, Arena — Arena! Ruthlessness, blood, the bull, the *banderilla*. . . .

He was mortally afraid; for he was seized and lifted into the air. Two ursine ruffians dashed forward — he cast only a fleeting glance at them from an unaccustomed angle — they both had black beards, their white teeth gleamed between their full lips, they exuded a smell of sweat, and he felt himself being raised six feet nearer the sky. Right and left he saw dirty dishevelled mops of black hair like scalps round a savage chieftain's belt, and as the crowd swayed sharply to one side, a shiver ran up his spine to his neck; then suddenly the last black stretch of water vanished and the great leader, the man of stone, was borne to land. Before him projected the broad peasant head of Father Menozzi, opening his mouth wide, and raising both arms in the air, so that suddenly the whole crowd was silenced; and Guerra came to his senses, as though a kindly hand had been stroking his temples and had roused him from a dream. He now saw the world clearly. Menozzi, who was nearest to him, held his head thrown back, his powerful red neck rose out of the open collar of his cassock, a tri-

coloured sash cut crudely and blasphemously across his body above the hips, and his eyes surveyed the army and then turned up to the leader. It was fine! Great breaths made his massive chest rise and fall, but only the man who was sitting on his shoulders felt them. The heads of the two awestruck men right and left did not stir. Eyes were turned up to him, all breaths were for him! Guerra revealed a narrow strip of white teeth, slowly raised the hand that held his hat, and, drawing a deep breath, was in a moment listening to his own deep resonant voice:

“The hour has come! Brothers! Brothers! Freedom!”

Not for an instant was Father Menozzi dismayed by the brevity of the speech or the contrast it presented to his own mighty torrents of eloquence. With the musical genius of the popular stage-manager he immediately perceived that the limpid melody of the leader, re-echoed again and again in arch and vault, would develop into a veritable cathedral of effectiveness, a mighty fugue based on the short and solemn theme. Whereupon he raised his arms again and repeated the words in his sonorous bass. The army of eyes behind him was quickly transformed into an army of mouths, nothing but mouths, which in grand chorus roared forth the words in one long, unbroken litany. The waves of the few notes, high and low, rang along the quays, left and right, and rolled back grandly to Menozzi's second chant, and the second wave rose on a higher pitch.

Guerra had time to think over his words; for as soon as he had uttered them he knew they were not new to his lips. He had already intoned that chant word for word, tone for tone, once before, in front of a crowd of people, just as a tenor sings an aria. But where? — Why, twenty-seven years ago he had opened the revolution in Turin with this prologue in the Teatro Reale. It had been an abortive revolution, of course, and the police, who quickly came up behind him, had led him away like a rowdy miscreant; they did not even look at his hands which he had crossed at the wrists and held out to them

to be handcuffed; they had brought no handcuffs with them. Apparently they were not concerned with stage effects, but had seized him by his coat-sleeve — an ignominious retreat. The great words were re-echoed again and again, melodious, variegated, harmonized, and embellished. But the leader was convulsed with laughter; his whole body heaved. The shoulders on which he was sitting, however, were too respectful to notice it. Then, lo! the two bearded heads by his thighs suddenly looked up at the leader. Guerra's features were distorted, his eyes were moist, and he looked as though he were dramatically torn by the violent emotion of the moment.

Right and left Guerra saw the upturned ursine heads of his bearers, strangely foreshortened. It was like a burlesque of hell. He bit his lips.

"But the echo is new, my good fellow," he muttered distractedly. They either did not hear what he said, or failed to grasp it, and one head, turning towards the other, observed across the sacred thighs:

"He's weeping for joy!"

The speaker did not know that he was shouting, so great was the hubbub all around. Menozzi, whose attention had been diverted from the leader by his massed choir, heard the remark only too clearly. Guerra was crying! What a reward for his idea and what a new idea to boot! He scrutinized Guerra's face. Possibly that was his way of crying! Who could pretend to understand a demigod? — He raised his arms aloft. Everybody was silent.

"Behold him! Behold him!" he bellowed. "Behold his emotion! Oh, rare and precious tears of joy! Precious joy — Freedom! . . ."

Once more the torrent roared and Guerra felt constrained to pass the back of his hand across his eyes. He had recovered his composure and did not wish to give his enthusiastic friends the lie. The fresh outburst of cheering no longer affected him. At a hint from Menozzi his bearded carriers moved forward and conveyed him along the front of the crowd. His eye

glided over the faces of the cheering mob. The shouting and the way they all opened their mouths as they called his name made the people look extraordinarily alike and not only softened their brutality, their daring, and their bloodthirstiness, but also made up for any deficiency and lack of sincerity in the demonstration. Guerra's expression grew more friendly, and he began to bow, smiling faintly. One or two port officials, who were standing in the background, shyly and good-humouredly displaying the blatant arms and colours of their Grand-ducal uniforms, eventually thanked the masses for their kindness in allowing them to remain unmolested, by saluting the leader like an officer as he was borne past them. Possibly even this little interlude had been arranged beforehand by the organizers of the ovation, thought Guerra, and bowed. But, suddenly, his eyes opened aghast, and his neck stiffened. The wild genius of Menozzi had forgotten nothing; he had even organized an enthusiastic demonstration on the part of the most wretched and oppressed among the populace to welcome the liberator. A horrible procession of beggars and ragged loafers, the halt, the maimed, and the blind, the bungled and botched of all descriptions, and the rarest examples of what the curse of God can make of man, such as are to be found only in the ports of southern countries, now appeared. The deaf and dumb alone were unrepresented, for the whole crowd was expected to shout. Indeed, all that was asked of them was to pack all the pent-up indignation and suffering of their lives into their acclamation of the leader. And this they did right willingly. Those who had arms to wave waved them. One man who had no arms, and whose strip of tricolour was fastened round his neck like a dog-collar, waved his shouting head, the sole purpose of which seemed to be to hold his mouth, for he had no nose, and his eyes were two holes gradually being hollowed out by disease.

"God Almighty! God Almighty!" exclaimed Guerra. He was speaking to himself, but the heads right and left of his thighs heard what he said, and spread it abroad later; "I see

it — I see it! The soul is dipped from hot into cold, and from water into fire! Faith! So much faith! A great office! ”

The three last figures in the row of cripples — for after them came the women and girls — the three last were men without legs, diminutive centaurs on four wheels, horribly close to the ground, propelling their little vehicles by pushing them along with their bound-up hands. The black-bearded cripple of Arles had at least been one alone. But here there were three of them. The former had softly and mysteriously repeated the indignant protest of the fat little champion of bulls: “*Je proteste énergiquement!*” But these three were yelling cruelly at the man so infinitely high above their heads:

“Guerra!”

It did not sound very different. It was merely a more emphatic protest!

“I shall disappoint them,” the ears close to the thighs heard. “There can be nothing but disappointment for them. Who am I, forsooth, that they should expect me to give them back their legs?”

Then came the women and girls, who, as is the way in this world, were old and young, ugly and beautiful, though the belles with small faces, dainty noses, and large eyes formed quite a large proportion. Their eyes were bright, their cheeks shining; and they shouted all manner of things — not merely his name.

“What a fine man our Guerra is!” they cried, and much else besides. — “I should be quite happy now,” thought Guerra, “if only the cripples had not come.”

“How serious he is! How stern! Madonna!” they cried; for he was no longer able to smile. His bearers were beginning to feel his weight.

The revolutionary guards, who had no mind to deliver the leader into the hands of the bourgeois of the city and regarded

no house as secure against treachery or the bullet of a spy, had without ado requisitioned a luxurious Grand-ducal pleasure-yacht and placed it at Guerra's disposal. The dainty white vessel was riding at anchor at a point in the inner harbour which could easily be watched and guarded. And here, in the very heart of the revolution and surrounded by an intricate net of watchers, there was no danger of a murderous attack on the part of the Bargello. Caminer was the only man they feared; there was no one else.

But Guerra made little use of his place of refuge and did not remain long in the royal saloon, the mahogany walls of which were as bright as mirrors. It was imperative for his turbulent reception to be quickly followed up by a political attack; there must be no hesitation or delay. The tempo of the moment had to be maintained and accelerated; on that everything depended. And Guerra was capable of swift action; he knew every step he had to take. The program was all arranged. Livorno was not Florence, and Florence must know that he was there. There were now as many reasons for armed petitions as there were grapes on the hills of Tuscany in September. The next item on the program was to form a civic guard and march off.

He was only awaiting the arrival of Scaleterra, who presented himself at the appointed hour on the following day. They greeted each other heartily, though not effusively, with as few words as possible.

"It was a good thing you weren't present at the reception," said Guerra, when they were alone. "I should have puzzled you again — I seemed such an actor."

"In our calling that is inevitable at such times," replied Scaleterra, "it is perfectly natural and calls for no apology."

"That is not true," returned Guerra. "I only seemed to be an actor; I was not really an actor. The Devil arranged a mad demonstration by a mob, I laughed, and the crowd thought I was crying, and when the Devil began to raise hell in earnest and I felt like crying, the women shouted: 'What a fine

man!' So you see, I did not behave like either an actor or a demagogue."

Scaleterra looked at him.

"Are you really happy now, Guerra?" he asked.

For a moment Guerra was taken aback, and then, as though he were embarrassed, he replied softly: "Yes!"

"I miss the two Dioscuri," observed Scaleterra, changing the subject. He meant Othello and Orestes, who had gradually risen to fame.

"So do I," replied Guerra with a laugh. "They are growling in Sestri. I never thought the Government would take my arrival so calmly, and I did not want to let the couple run any risks. After all, they are deserters! But I will send for them as soon as I know they cannot be taken from me—that is to say, as soon as I am master. And that will be soon, if it is not the case already."

"Oh, ho!" cried Scaleterra with a cunning look in his eye. "Your confidence at least sets a good sharp pace." He paused for a moment, possibly only to take breath, and then asked: "And what about Madda?"

"In Paris, of course!" answered Guerra, and repeated "Of course!" emphatically, with a far-away look in his eyes.

"I beg your pardon," said the journalist. At this moment Menozzi entered and announced a representative from the Government, apparently an exalted official, but unarmed and not dangerous. A sedate-looking man stepped in and courteously invited the leader to come to the Government Palace to hold a consultation with the Governor—under safe-conduct, of course.

"I already see the situation in a somewhat different light," replied Guerra, "and will stand surety for the Governor if he will visit me here."

For the first time the official looked into Guerra's eyes, and smiled.

"If all you wish to do, Signor Guerra, is to behave in this cavalier fashion," he said, "I beg to say you will not succeed.

For, as far as I know, my Chief would be perfectly willing to come to see you."

"Good!" Guerra replied. "But tomorrow we are going to Florence."

The daring impudence of this short sentence made the men start. Scaleterra and Menozzi exchanged glances. Once again the official scrutinized the leader. Whereupon, looking extremely grave, he bowed in silence. An hour later he returned with the Governor, a certain Marchese Bottai, a man who was still young, energetic, and sympathetic, whom Guerra greeted with an alert straightforward look.

"I trust you will believe me when I tell you, Signor Guerra, that I might have brought a few guns into action," he observed.

"I think you are far too clever to do anything so utterly unbecoming."

The Governor gave a good-natured little smile.

"Quite apart from that, I have just received instructions from the Government not to take any action. And, in any case, there still remains my sympathy with your mission."

Guerra looked up.

"Have you come here to tell me that?"

"Yes."

"In certain circumstances my mission might be directed against the dynasty itself," said Guerra sternly.

"I too want Italy to be a kingdom; I don't want any second-hand offshoots of Austria."

A Nationalist or an *agent provocateur* of the Caminer school?

"Has your visit been prompted by any more specific reason, my Lord Governor?" he asked cautiously.

"Yes. I understand you are going to Florence tomorrow. I take it your object is to hold a demonstration in favour of the formation of a civil guard?"

"Yes."

"I also take it that you will be successful. If not, I am

prepared to form a body of that kind in my district on my own responsibility."

Guerra remained cool.

"After all, these are only trifles. What is your attitude to my Party's program in general?"

"I wish you all good luck!"

"That is not sufficiently definite. Would you, in certain circumstances, be prepared to place the government in my hands?"

"Yes!"

There was a moment's silence. Guerra scrutinized the Governor's face. It was frank, angular, manly. The man did not look like a spy.

"You will allow me, Marchese," he said at last, "for the time being, at least, to leave both you and myself a free hand, so that we can both entertain whatever doubts we choose, and I may remind you at the proper time of your words."

The Governor made a movement to go, but hesitated. Guerra smiled.

"Do you wish to have my assurance, my lord Marchese, that in no circumstances do I intend to mention you, your visit, your remarks—your word, in the conversations I may possibly have with the gentlemen in Florence?"

"I don't mind about that in the least," declared the Governor. "But an attack on your person, which is still within the realm of possibility, I should mind very much indeed. I am prepared—"

"Thank you," interrupted Guerra. "We can look after ourselves. Besides, you must not compromise yourself too soon. That would not help my cause at all."

"I am well aware," said the Governor, as he took his leave, "that your coldness is directed not at me personally, but at my official position."

"Certainly!" exclaimed Guerra, suddenly growing more friendly, and he shook the Governor's hand. As soon as they were alone, Scaleterra looked inquiringly at him.

"What do you think of it?" Guerra inquired cheerfully. Scaleterra too was in good spirits.

"Damnably honest — painfully so — even to the way the actor shook hands!"

"Bravo!" cried Guerra with a laugh, "I was actually thinking it was the other way round!"

7

That morning Guerra set out with Scaleterra and Menozzi and five hundred of the guards, whom the monk had chosen and for whose discipline he vouched. To avoid a fresh demonstration the rendezvous had been fixed at a point outside the town, in a sleepy little suburb on the Pisa road. Guerra and Scaleterra drove almost unobserved in a half-open post-chaise through the place. At the point where the long High Street crosses the Square, Guerra pointed to a house close to the Cathedral.

"I don't know whether there is already a tablet there," he said, with a smile, "but that's where I was born." Then growing graver, he added: "But the sight of it leaves me curiously cold. What do you think of such hardness of heart?"

"Not much!" rejoined Scaleterra. Guerra became pensive.

"Throughout my life the person I have thought least about has been my father, Scaleterra. He was a *bon viveur* who died of oyster poisoning, so that he met his end in harness, as it were. He was also a brilliant advocate, with forensic gifts which he turned to account even in private life and used at every dinner-table. During the first half of my life, at all events, I had reason enough to think of him."

"Possibly," said Scaleterra. "But at the present moment we are on our way to Florence."

"Why will you not let me indulge in a few reminiscences? I feel no need to prepare myself for Florence. I know my lesson. — But I hardly knew my mother, who died very young and is said to have been a beauty. As a boy I used to think

passionately of her and have often thought of her since, chiefly owing to Madda, who is said to be like her. I have often been tormented by the thought that I cannot remember her, and that the portraits of an elegant lady in Empire dress which used to hang on our walls at home and were supposed to represent her made no appeal to me."

"What a love of confessions!" observed Scaleterra with a smile; "or is it only your Guerraesque way of commenting on that hardness of heart which I failed to question?"

"Listen, *amico*," said Guerra. "Ever since you have known that I am a different man, or in any case would like to be a different man, you seem to take a delight in quibbles, which, if they are intended to be characteristic of me, come twenty years too late."

"But I am only joking!" Scaleterra protested quite truthfully. "I like to tease you, because I love you, Gasto."

"And as for confessions, my dear fellow, it is precisely in this dusty town, where, as a schoolboy, I used to fling horse-dung and cherry-stones at the baker over there, as he was sweating over the kneading-board and could not defend himself—it is precisely here, in this place, that I feel I must also tell you of my strange boyish yearning for my mother, my mysterious lust for the first woman I ever desired, which was stronger in me than in other people, because my mother was only a figure of my imagination. It lasted until my thirtieth year. But my sister was the innocent cause of that, and it may have affected her whole destiny and is still a cause of distress to her, my dear friend."

Scaleterra said nothing, but his nose twitched.

"Do you know why I tell you this precisely now? Not because I wish you to grant me absolution—that is no longer necessary. No, because I have only just discovered the connexion. And I am telling you about it simply out of joy for the light it has shed on the final result of my blood-test. Do you understand?—the question whether my blood was ever tainted. And it was not. Such a discovery makes one com-

municative. If you were not here, I should have to tell the coachman — but in French, which he does not understand.”

“But I understand, Gasto,” said Scaleterra, blushing with embarrassment, as he pressed Guerra’s arm.

Menozzi, with his five hundred, was waiting for them in the mean little dusty suburb whose one claim to beauty was the stretch of silvery sea on the horizon. For the conveyance of the guards they had fifty heavy wagons with them, strong and capacious, built for carrying blocks of marble, with teams of three horses apiece. The departure was carried out quietly and as though it had been rehearsed. Ten men sprang into each of the wagons and were driven away at a slow trot along the road. The leader’s post-chaise, which also contained Menozzi, drove in the middle of the line of wagons. A little way beyond the village of Stagno they left the main road, in order to avoid Pisa and obviate the necessity of too long a halt in that extremely Radical university town. On the evening of Guerra’s arrival the students had held a wearisome torchlight procession lasting an hour in honour of the leader who had been an old student from Livorno. Thus the train of wagons was obliged to proceed along a rough field path which was a short cut, bringing them at the end of twenty miles on to the high road from Pisa to Florence.

Guerra was in no hurry. He wanted to reach Florence only at nightfall, so as to give rumour time to fly ahead through town and country and raise the alarm. Even this had been arranged by Menozzi, who had provided a couple of well-mounted scouts and was sure everything would be all right. In the farms and villages along the road, only the astonished eyes of old men, straw-plaiting women, and dirty children stared at the procession; while, from time to time, the men who were working in the fields on either side of the main road would straighten themselves and shout out something incomprehensible, or gaze curiously at the line of wagons. But in the small towns they passed, and particularly in Empoli, the atmosphere was already political, hopes ran high, and the

slowly advancing post-chaise bearing the leader, who gravely raised his hat, was honoured with tributes of flowers, or greeted with loud cheers and clapping of hands. Ardent spirits who tried to join the procession were warned off by Menozzi, who liked to act the demigod before the country-folk; and springing down from the post-chaise like a boy, he ran along the line of wagons, discouraging enthusiasts with kind and dignified words.

Little was said in the post-chaise. Guerra was very quiet, as though the strange conversation in Livorno were still occupying his mind. But possibly he was restrained by the presence of Menozzi, whom, for some obscure reason, he felt he must keep at arm's length. Moreover, Menozzi, who seemed to be able to do what he liked with his powerful body, constantly fell asleep when he was not required along the line of wagons, and would sit snoring, with his mouth open and his chin pressed on to his chest, so that his stiff beard was forced upwards and hid half his face. But he seemed to be quite accustomed to the posture, for his skin did not twitch when the points of his beard tickled it. He looked at once ridiculous and forbidding, and Guerra soon ceased to look at him. Scaleterra, the Silent, was apparently busy with thoughts which might well have occupied him on a much longer journey.

The lower the sun sank, the more hilly did the country become. To the north the hills of Pistoia could already be discerned, wrapped about in purple like a bishop's cassock. Presently the road approached the Arno, the river-valley grew very narrow, and the ineffable beauty of the Florentine hills lay round them, while the sun at their backs flung red garlands among the jet-black cypresses, which seemed to hold the night in thrall. The farther bank was covered with birches, whose trunks were still as full of light as though the day, to which these trees belong, were just dawning. The column rattled like a foreign host past a wood of pines, beneath the tops of which the stillness of night was suspended.

"I feel the landscape is angry because we have come in such numbers," observed Guerra suddenly.

Scaletterra glanced at him in amazement. Menozzi was asleep. Truth to tell, Guerra had not addressed his words to either of them.

"There is a degree of beauty in landscape which is so far removed from all questions of bulk and variety that it has to smile at these things to hold its own against them. That is the meaning of Tuscany's strange irony, when she sees regiments on the march."

"In the first place, we are demonstrators," said Scaletterra.

"Regiments are demonstrators, first and last."

"What are you aiming at, Guerra? If this were a moment for joking, I should say, at a poem."

"It would certainly be the most beautiful thing to do, when one's heart is agitated. But I can't do it. I have been able to write poetry only when things were moving very slowly. But poets are people without caution or limitations. And I am no poet. I have known that for some time."

"Why is your heart agitated, Guerra? Does the night make you feel faint-hearted? I should understand that."

"On the contrary, it gives me courage, my dear fellow, and that is why these wagons, which are certainly not carrying marble and are making the deuce of a rattle in front and behind, are somewhat nerve-rending. But that is not the fault of the night, but of the landscape, which is afraid, not of beauty, but of that classical heroism which we have so completely lost. Tuscany has no love of pitched battles; if conflict there must be, she prefers the duel. And what I feel is that Tuscany is amused at Guerra on the warpath. No matter! I may be able to think of the landscape in a different mood presently. History is generous towards such cases as ours."

"And is your heart still agitated, Guerra?"

"Yes, for joy! — a very different joy from that which will please the landscape. In Fiesole there is a little girl I love, and whom I shall see again."

Scaletterra silently shook his head. The valley was broadening. They were in the neighbourhood of Signa, with its soft hills and its golden-green pearl-strings of grapes gleaming between the leafless crooked dwarf-oaks in the evening light. There was a faint smile on Guerra's lips.

"Nothing could be more amusing than to imagine Maria Pia by the side of that animated beard," he observed, looking at Menozzi, who suddenly woke up.

"Can you really think of nothing more serious at this hour?" Scaletterra inquired gently.

"Oh, yes," replied Guerra, "but it is human and it does me good to think of day when night is falling."

"Do you really wish to lead the column, Signor Guerra?" inquired Menozzi interrupting energetically, "and through the streets?"

"Yes, it is dark, and I run very little risk."

"And if by any chance you should be arrested either during or after the presentation of the petition, which, of course, is unthinkable, we are not to fire?"

"On no account! If the people really wish to commit suicide in that foolish way, all you have to do is to roar for hours and even days on end, until they are dead and I am back with you again!"

At about eight o'clock, a good hour after sunset, the column reached the suburbs of Florence which spread along the Pisa road, and twenty minutes later it halted before the San Frediano Gate. The five hundred jumped down from their wagons and formed up. The proletarian quarter had shot forth its enthusiastic crowds, who regaled the guards with fruit and wine. "Only one glassful to each man!" shouted Menozzi along the lines. The success of his discipline was proved when not a single man took more than one, most of them asking for grapes.

Guerra and Scaletterra went up to the watch at the gate, which had not been reinforced.

"My name is Gasto Guerra, of Livorno. This is my friend,

the author, Pier Luigi Scaleterra, of Florence. We have come here with five hundred citizens of Livorno to present a petition to the Government for the granting of certain political reforms. May we pass?"

The man in charge of the watch was an old fellow with a small face under his gigantic cylindrical helmet, and intelligent eyes gleaming beneath his grey brows.

"We knew you were coming, Signor Guerra," he cried excitedly. "If you are aiming at organizing a revolution, pray go away. But if you really wish to present a petition, I must act according to regulations."

"Have you had definite instructions about our coming?" inquired Scaleterra.

"No," replied the watchman, "only the general order that demonstrations must take place between sunrise and sunset. So I must ask you to come back tomorrow and close the gate."

"Why have you not closed it yet?"

"Because the people prevented me from doing so." The old man spoke in low distressed tones. "But that won't save me from being court-martialed when you have gone. I might have fired on the crowd, who have no fire-arms, but I did not like to."

"Very well," replied Guerra with a smile, "we shall have to use violence."

He returned with Scaleterra to Menozzi, who, on hearing what had happened, sent fifty men forward. At a sharp word of command they pulled their pistols from their pockets; the cheering mob wanted to support them with knives and clubs. The fifty guards quickly surrounded the ten men of the watch, who had surrendered, and protected them from being attacked by the people of San Frediano, until the rest of the Livorno contingent, with Guerra, Scaleterra, and Father Menozzi at their head, had passed through the gate. Whereupon they brought up the rear. Meanwhile the crowd, who had immediately forgotten the soldiers of the watch and had allowed them

to return to the guard-room of the gate, poured after Guerra's men.

Menozzi could not prevent his column from being followed by an ever-growing crowd; he may even have expected it. His rear-guard kept the people at a certain distance and prevented them from mingling in the ranks of the Livornese guardsmen. The procession marched through the Borgo San Frediano, which was dark and badly lighted, while every window was crammed with people shouting excitedly. When the hubbub grew so loud that the cheers of the crowd could no longer be distinguished from the growing signs of hostility, Menozzi, who was not the man to hesitate, quickly began to intone the Pius hymn in his mighty bass voice. The five hundred immediately took up the refrain, which sounded more bellicose than religious, and with the melody quickly drowned the tumult in the gloomy streets. The wild Borgo, with all its shouting windows, was, like the rest of the nation, devoted to music and immediately joined in the singing.

But the procession was pulled up on reaching the cross-roads at the Via de Serragli, where a large crowd had collected and were shouting Guerra's name above the singing, as though it were a watchword.

"Here I am!" cried Guerra, stepping forward. "I thank you! But now let us pass!"

An athlete, with no forehead and a chin like a rock, hugged him so violently that his ribs cracked.

"Guerra to the death!" he shouted, hoarse with excitement, and his followers yelled the ill-omened battle-cry: "Guerra and Guillotine!" in rhythmic cadence.

Guerra, with a laugh, released himself from the man's arms.

"Splendid, Guillotine!" he shouted, "but I do not want you yet. Stop with your janizaries in reserve. And now let us get on!"

It was Guillotine, the King of the neighbouring Via del Campuccio, the criminal quarter of Florence. He was the

head of the organized body of thieves and *souteneurs*, and an old member of the Party — the man who had played a part in the last scene of poor Gioia's life. But Guerra did not know that. Happy and obedient, the athlete drove his followers away from the cross-roads, and Guerra turned to the right.

"Left!" cried Menozzi. "Don't we want to go to the Piazza? We must cross the Ponte alla Carraia."

"Left, Guerra!" echoed Scaleterra. Guerra laughed in high glee.

"For Heaven's sake, let me improvise a little!"

After about a hundred yards he turned out of the Via de Serragli and kept to the left. The procession passed the San Spiritu singing.

"Are you going to the Palazzo Pitti?" cried Menozzi, smartly slapping himself on the thigh.

"Guerra, are you going to the Grand Duke first?" inquired Scaleterra.

"Yes," replied Guerra, "I have a certain feeling for rank."

On the gigantic square in front of the Palazzo Pitti the five hundred looked a mere handful. And it was here that the crowds following them and filling the background proved an asset. Menozzi deployed his men over a wide front and ordered every fifth man to light his lantern. The square was illumined and all of a sudden torches appeared in the background and seemed to set it on fire.

The palace, its noble proportions looking gigantic in the blackness of the night, remained dark.

Guerra stepped forward alone fifty yards in front of the men of Livorno, and, brandishing a lighted torch in each hand, shouted:

"A basso l'Austria!"

The crowd behind him took up the cry in louder, higher tones, four times, five times, until the leader lowered his torches and there was silence.

Whereupon again raising a torch, he shouted:

"Civic Guard! Civic Guard!"

Again the chorus took up the cry, and the strange canon was continued, until a light appeared on the first floor of the palace. A window was opened and a narrow-shouldered figure stood delicately silhouetted against the light. Guerra's torch once more gave the signal for the alternate cries, and again silence reigned. Deep silence!

Then from the open window came a weak, refined ironical voice:

"Long live the Grand Duke!"

8

Baron Caminer had had the audacity not to inform the Grand Duke of the approach of Guerra and his demonstrators from Livorno. He had even given strict orders to the gentlemen in waiting on duty at the palace to see that the news did not reach the Grand Duke's ears through underlings in the Palace Guard, "in order to avoid disturbing His Royal Highness." Caminer's reasons for these measures had sounded so plausible that the Prime Minister had actually confirmed them after they had been taken. Owing to an unfortunate concatenation of circumstances, however, the news of Guerra's march on Florence had reached the Bargello so late that there was now some danger that the Grand Duke would have to be informed of it hurriedly and that in his highly nervous condition the most unexpected results might ensue. Caminer hurried round to the Government Palace at once, but the Prime Minister was not there. The blind nobleman was in the habit of returning to his magnificent palace in the Via San Bastiano early in the afternoon. Possibly because the eternal night in which he lived protected him from the excitement and bewildering turmoil of the world about him, none of the startling events of recent years had succeeded in disturbing his serenity or inducing him to make the smallest alteration in his habits. In his drawing-room, with its walls and furniture upholstered in rich red brocade, where it was impossible to be-

lieve or remember that he was blind, he received the Bargello. The latter was somewhat short of breath and seemed to have felt the hand of time more in his heart than on his hair and skin. His slight annoyance at being obliged to run beyond Santissima Annunziata after this marble image, to whom he was secretly devoted, had made him mount the stairs too fast. The blind man was sitting in his large red chair, erect, white, and infinitely peaceful. Waiting for the Bargello to recover his breath, he listened with but little interest, as though his secretary were reciting polished Seicento verses, to the report of Guerra's march on Florence and of the way the secret had been kept from the Grand Duke. At the mention of the monarch's name he raised his delicate brows for the fraction of a second. From him this implied an emphatic protest, which Caminer was quick to meet.

"Remember, your Excellency, that on receiving the news, the Prince is quite capable of immediately rousing his Guardia Nobile and the infantry at the Belvedere and starting a general massacre, which would drown, not only the whole town, but himself also in a mad bath of blood!"

"Yes," muttered the blind man, "you are right. For Signor Guerra has come only to urge reforms, and though he may press the pace somewhat, personally I do not mind."

"I shall request the other members of the Council of State to remain the whole night in the Palazzo Vecchio. The Prince can be informed early tomorrow morning, especially as we know for certain that the petitioners are going to march direct to the Piazza and have no intention of disturbing his night's rest. Are you coming too, Marchese?"

"Oh, yes, I will come. This Guerra interests me; I think he is a remarkable man."

Caminer laughed, though without reason.

"I regard him as our successor," and he laughed even louder — "temporarily, of course."

The blind man disliked noise of any kind, and particularly Caminer's laugh, which allowed him to guess how detestably

ruddy the man must be. Moreover, his last remark had been neither seemly nor relevant and had certainly not justified laughter. He raised his sleepy head reproachfully.

Thus it came about that the Grand Duke was one of the few persons in Florence who knew nothing about the armed petitioners from Livorno, and their march along the high road from Pisa. But Maria Corleone, who for the last few weeks had again regularly devoted her evenings to the weak and tired monarch, knew all about it.

Ever since the Prince too had lost his spouse, and they had both attained an age which is supposed to be beyond scandal, either Maria Corleone visited him at the castle, or else he went to her mansion on the Ponte Santa Trinità, quite openly entering by the front door. The little villa near San Miniato, in which they had concealed their love—where he, more than she, had enjoyed the simple completion to his life, a fact he did not forget—had already been in the possession of an unsuspecting English painter for ten years.

During the last few weeks of political unrest, when the Grand Duke had not wished to leave the palace, she had invariably gone to him. Today, impelled by the news, she had arrived earlier than usual. The Prince, who was already in his library, was still at dinner, strangely lost at the large round table in the spacious room, and looking particularly lonely surrounded by footmen, who stood in mute attendance at the door.

"He is a man to be pitied," she thought. He stood up and greeted her affably. Latterly his friendliness had become different and was little more than a thinly veiled melancholy, spreading sadness about him. He discussed ordinary topics.—"Why does he not speak of Guerra?" she wondered. He gazed at her.

"Yes, yes," he said with a smile, "even my books here wish to depose me. And I have loved them so much and taken such great care of them. I know them ever so much better than my subjects—I know every one of the ten thousand volumes and

am such a good librarian that I can shut my eyes and still see the place occupied by the first edition of Poggio's *Facetiæ*. But now they are all turning their backs on me. I should never have believed that books could be as thoroughly at home with allegories as men are. Here I am already a stranger, a foreigner, as the Radicals call me. But there is a touch of courtesy in the word; for what they really mean is 'Austrian'!"

She listened to him silent and wondering.—"Why does he not tell me that Guerra is coming? And if he is so proud, why does he admit his faint-heartedness even to his books?"—He made an elaborate gesture.

"People will say," he continued, speaking rapidly, as though he had been silent long enough, "Signor Guerra will say the books do not belong to me, but to Italy. Everything belongs to Italy. I alone do not belong to Italy—I alone! And when I speak German, the Germans would like to take me for an Italian!"

"Now he has referred to Guerra," she thought, "but only as an egregious example. But I shall not wait any longer."

"Guerra—you know . . ." she began. The Prince, standing before his books, turned his head quickly over his shoulder to look at her and then turned away again. His back looked so sad that she said no more.

They sat down at the table at some distance from one another. Gurera's name was, as it were, banished from the room. It took some time, some moments of silence, which neither of them counted, for they were busy.

"Do you know what I was thinking about before you came?" the Grand Duke suddenly inquired. "I was not thinking of my own death, but of Prince George's, which was so sudden in the end."

During her strange married life the Prince had paid but scant attention to the decrepit roué, the absinth-sodden Prentender, whose claims to a long defunct northern dynasty made him ridiculous, and it was only during the stormy period of that February of 1831 that behind the man's absurd exterior

he had discovered an extraordinary human dignity. Nay, during a remarkable discussion on the subject of Maria Corleone's welfare and safety he had received from this hypothetical monarch a lesson in matters of feeling and behaviour which he would never forget, and which had inspired his fine treatment of the Princess, who at that time was implicated in a charge of high treason. He had, of course, not acknowledged this influence, even to her; but had drawn personal profit from the admirable example. When Prince George, who had chivalrously followed his wife to Rome, died in the first year of their exile, the Grand Duke had merely sent a formal letter of condolence, and even afterwards had never referred to him again. She had been somewhat displeased by this apparent indifference, particularly as at that time she too had discovered sufficient reason for modifying her opinion of her husband. But the circumstances of his death demanded silence. The sudden, almost capricious way in which the Prince now asked for an explanation provoked her. His loss of courage, Guerra, who was coming and from whom he would be able to take a lesson in courage, Guerra and the march of time, which already vibrated in the atmosphere of the room, though it could not be specifically described in so many words—the whole evening, in fact, provoked her, and she pursed her lips.

"He shot himself," she replied.

"Why?" he inquired, in low colourless tones.

"Not on my account or yours. Good God, how strangely your mind works today!" she cried, perceiving his distress. "He took an unfortunate occurrence unnecessarily deeply to heart. He happened to be completely besotted with drink when some perfectly futile Bonapartist delegation, which was staking on a successful *coup* requiring the diplomatic assistance of his claims to a throne, presented themselves to him in an official capacity, and through the clumsiness or malice of a servant were actually ushered in. When George was sober again—and when he was sober he possessed the remarkable capacity of being able to remember quite accurately all that had hap-

pened when he was drunk — he must have come to the conclusion that his life no longer had any meaning or justification, and returning to his cups, he fired at the bottle of absinth and then shot himself."

"No meaning or justification for his life!" repeated the Duke slowly. "But what about you—where were you?"

"Not in Rome, but in Frascati, alas!"

"And why have you told me all this only today?"

"Because ever since his death until today you have mentioned his name only once, and that was in a formal letter of condolence."

"But, Maria, is it necessary to be continually mentioning names?"

She said nothing, but was strangely moved.—"He is evading the subject of Guerra," she thought; "he is referring to Gurera, not to poor George."

"Extraordinary man!" exclaimed the Grand Duke.

"Who?" she asked in bewilderment. He smiled faintly. His expression was full of pained understanding.

"Not Guerra," he replied softly and without a trace of irony, "but Prince George. When I spoke to him for the last time, and, as a matter of fact, for the first time, on a very bad day in my life—I do not say it was the worst day I shall ever see, for that has yet to come, but it was a very bad day—he said something, Maria, which I shall never forget. His precise words were: 'You know as well as I do where indiscretion ends and compulsion begins—or shall we say fear—and where gratitude ought to cease—or shall we say love . . . ?' And as he spoke, his eyebrows rose and fell spasmodically and his eyes were very sad."

"What is the point of all this—now . . . ?" she murmured in anguish.

"Yes, yes," he said, nodding his head, "it was about your fate and mine. He spoke quite openly and exclaimed: 'It is nine years now!' And it was nine years since we—since I had loved you. And that very evening Guerra was brought before

us, and I asked him, you remember, how long he had known you — what I meant was how long had you loved him — and he replied, for ten years.”

She looked at him, her face and neck aflame.

“What is the point of all this — what is the point . . . ?” she repeated softly. “After all, I am an old woman now, and Guerra is certainly not coming on my account. . . .”

“He is coming to me,” replied the Prince sullenly, “and I shall certainly be less friendly than I was. I shall probably have every reason to repent of certain kind actions in the past.”

“So you know he is coming?”

He looked intently at her.

“Of course he will come one of these days. He won’t be satisfied with ruling Livorno!”

She stared at him. — “He does not know! He does not know!” she thought. “And I? What shall I say now?” —

“Would you have him shot?” she asked.

He tugged at his side-whiskers.

“I am going to disappoint you and say yes. But all this is mere theory, like your husband’s crown. We shall not be able to find anybody willing to shoot him. I myself have never learnt the use of fire-arms!”

There was a vague suggestion of incipient hostility. She pressed the palms of her hands against the surface of the table and spat out two words at him:

“Your rescuer!”

“Who?” he cried excitedly.

“You know as well as I do — Guerra.”

The Grand Duke shouted — for the first time after twenty-six years of exemplary behaviour — he shouted:

“Damn it, the murderer who refrains from murder is far from having earned a life-saving medal!”

Though she might have said much in reply, she refrained. Nothing more passed between them, and she would have left without a farewell had she not been moved by a certain cruel

curiosity. They sat stiff and still at the great table and waited — she for Guerra or his echo, he for a short respite in the violent beating of his heart, before revealing his shame or otherwise humbling himself and asking forgiveness. The balmy air of the September night was wafted through the window from the Boboli Gardens; its velvet blackness, still strewn with the gold dust of the wine harvest, was impregnated with the fragrance of flowers, rosin, wine, and sunshine, while hosts of moths of all varieties and tiny little glass-winged insects circled and pirouetted madly about and met sudden death on the table-cloth. Of all the living things in the gardens the noisiest were the palms, which seemed to be grinding their sharp leaves in the breeze. The cypresses were quiet as ever, quiet as burning candles, not aware of any stir in the air — quieter, indeed, for they radiated, not light, but darkness.

“Forgive me,” murmured the Grand Duke, closing his eyes. She did not stir. On the table-cloth the tiny mad insects danced among their dead.

At last, sounds from the outer world permeated the blackness of the garden. At first it was like the humming of bees, then it became the muffled sound of a host of men, like a cloud slowly stretching from the street-front of the castle to the garden side. She heard it much sooner than he did; but she did not stir. For a moment the sound grew louder in the garden and then died down. She opened her eyes wide. Presently came the murmur of human voices in the distance. She turned pale as death. It sounded like a call or the beginning of a song. The Grand Duke too now raised his hand.

“Who is that singing?” he exclaimed. The call was followed by a roar of many voices, the singer by a chorus. The Prince sprang to his feet. “What’s that?” he cried. At that moment a *chasseur* entered stumbling with fright, forgetting even to knock.

“Pardon, your Imperial . . . Pardon, a demonstration . . .” he stammered.

“Guerra!” exclaimed Maria Corleone in soft clear tones.

Raising his fists above his head, the Grand Duke shouted, as he had done a moment before:

"At once, Piero — here at once — the commandants of the Guardia Nobile and the infantry. . . ." But, stopping short, he spread out his fingers, shook his hands, clenched his fists, and again shook them. "No, no, nonsense!" he cried, shaking his head, and dashed out of the library to the front of the palace. The Piazza seemed to be on fire. Maria Corleone followed him, as did also the servant, with a candlestick.

"*A basso l'Austria!*" chanted Guerra once more. And suddenly Maria Corleone burst into sobs.

"Guerra!" she cried, beside herself. "It is he!"

"Stop outside with the light," the Prince said to the *chasseur*, who had suddenly become quite calm, "just a moment longer, I want to hear what it is all about *incognito*, so to speak. . . ."

The canon outside rose and fell, following the rhythm of the two torches in the foreground.

"A good pyrotechnist," observed the Grand Duke. "I mean Guerra this time. Apparently he likes to put himself in the limelight."

"For Heaven's sake, be kind to him!" she murmured irrelevantly. He gave a low laugh.

"What would you do in my place — do you understand what I say? — In my place?"

"Show yourself and say Yes! Say yes!"

"Excellent!" he replied. "Bring in the light, Piero!"

The *chasseur* hastily lighted a chandelier, and gradually the room was filled with light. She moved aside so as not to be seen, and watched the Grand Duke, who seemed quite calm and showed little sign of impatience.

"Open the window, Piero!"

And he went up to the window with an expression fit to meet the eyes on the Piazza — a hard, stony expression — and took his stand in the bay of the window, narrow-shouldered, his back breathing contempt.

"My God!" cried Maria Corleone anxiously. Whereupon

he hurled his words across the square, which was now quite still.

“Long live the Grand Duke!”

9

His weak voice did not carry far, and Guerra alone, in the foreground, heard plainly what he said. The mob gave various versions of what they heard. “*Viva il Granduca!*—“*Viva il grande duce!* (Long live the great leader!)”; who could that be but Guerra? Or “*Viva la guardia civica* (Long live the Civic Guard)!” Some who had heard only the “*Viva*” came to the conclusion that the Duke could not have shouted “*Viva!*” if he were refusing the petitions. Thus, after a moment’s hesitation, loud cheers rang out, each man shouting the “*Viva!*” he thought he had heard, while some, taking advantage of the tumult, actually shouted: “Long live the Grand Duke!” on their own account.

For a moment Guerra stood thunderstruck; then, as the Piazza was silent for a moment, he laughed aloud. The Grand Duke heard his laugh and stepped back from the window; but he could see the two torches still shaking because the man who held them was laughing.

While the whole square was cheering Guerra and shouting for War, the Grand Duke, the Pope, Italy, and then again for him, the great Leader, Guerra, stepped back to the front line.

“What did he really shout?” inquired Scaleterra.

“He shouted: ‘Long live the Grand Duke!’” replied Guerra with a laugh. “Of all the cheers that you can hear—and just listen to the priceless echoes!—I think it by far the most intelligent and the one which shows the most presence of mind.”

“But surely that’s taking rather a high hand!” cried Menozzi. “We ought to show him—”

“Every man has the right,” Guerra interrupted, “to set a high value on his breath, as long as he continues to breathe.”

It is even pleasing to God, your Reverence. Besides, see what the people make of the high-handed attitude. Now we must move on with all possible speed."

Menozzi gradually succeeded in persuading the mob to be quiet and go away. The procession turned into the Via dei Guicciardini. Thousands of bright lights from its torches and hurricane lights were reflected in the brass helmets and broad swords of the motionless double guard posted in front of the Guardia Nobile. On the Ponte Vecchio a few watchmen were crouching against the jewellers' shops, which had been closed much earlier in the day and were protected from the wild rapacious mob by iron shutters and wire screens. But even the suspicious crowd of followers from San Frediano passed by in fairly good order, waving torches above their heads, chattering, and in good spirits. When the somewhat rowdy procession wheeled right, the watchmen heaved a sigh of relief, as did also the colonnade soaring above their heads, beautifully illumined by the stars and the lights of the Lungarno, which leads to the Uffizi.

Between the arches on the Arno front, close to the spot where old Gioia's fate had been suddenly sealed by the dark death he had intended to mete out to the Grand Duke, stood the fat and pompous Don Lionello Vacca, who was still Caminer's right hand and had been made a Canon and head of the secret police. He had known not only old Gioia, Checca, the Baronissimo Steiner, and Prince George, but also Guerra, Madda, and Maria Corleone—all the threads of these interlaced destinies had passed through his fingers, which, clumsy though they were, had damaged nothing. And now that the procession turned away from the Ponte Vecchio and advanced towards him, certain memories returned to his mind. Once again, as on that evening in February 1831, Guerra, the dandy, was marching at the head of troops, his form silhouetted in the darkness by the light of the torches. On that occasion he had been the prisoner, and that strange creature Caminer—who was still as queer as ever—had accompanied him as the

victor. On that occasion, when fat Vacca had been ordered to keep in the shadow, just as he had been today, he had had time enough for meditation in front of the Palazzo Corleone, and the picture of the advancing rebels had been only a freak of his imagination. But today it was a reality, despite the fact that the Bargello was not in the van. But what might happen yet? Don Vacca, whose massive black form was not conscious of being menaced by any political disturbances, was neither agitated nor anxious. On the contrary, he was immensely pleased at being able to witness the changes in the political world, in which he was far from being merely an onlooker and at the spot where he stood, between the columns of the Uffizi, he felt he had enough health, strength, and will to play a part in the entertaining drama of life for yet a good while longer. He had just been on the Piazza dei Pitti and had every detail of the demonstration in his mind, even down to Guerra's laughter. And now he waited until Guerra had come within ten paces of him and with genuine sympathy studied his resolute features, upon which the favourable lighting shed a glamour that seemed like a special gift from the gods—compensation for the shadow cast by his body. (Don Vacca was certainly delighted by the rich profusion of images conjured up by his fancy, probably nourished from some source which had never failed since his seminary days and which accounted for his occasional flashes of sentimentality.) He scrutinized his not inglorious colleague Menozzi with considerable interest, and the long-nosed Scaletterra, who was not quite in keeping with the heroic scene, but whose hidden layers of courage and intelligence were sufficiently well known at the offices of the Chief of Police. Whereupon he stepped back into the colonnade to his left, held up his cassock, and with long, rapid strides vanished in the direction of the Palazzo Vecchio.

Guerra now descended the few steps leading to the Uffizi Gallery. The column behind him echoed his descending footsteps just as they had repeated his cries a few minutes previously

and would repeat in five minutes' time whatever he chose to tell them. The noble proportions of the narrow quadrangle formed by the cloisters, a banqueting-hall worthy of having the sky as roof, as it were, blithely exaggerated the growing clatter of the men's footsteps until it became quite deafening. The proximity of their goal imposed silence on the men, and no sound but the mighty tread of their feet could be heard. Each man as he turned into the gallery raised his head, just as the leader, Guerra, had done, and turned it slightly to the right, where, in eternal beauty, the tower of the Palazzo Vecchio soared bold and sylph-like into the night, sharply outlined, in spite of the dark sky, for there was sufficient light shed by a new moon, whose sickle shyly cut the battlements of the tower.

But this time Guerra did not tell Scaletterra: "I feel so young still. . . ." The Piazza was full of people, who good-naturedly allowed themselves to be pushed back by the petitioners. The giant pile of the Palazzo Vecchio, for centuries the background for popular gatherings, festivals, revolutions, and every display of popular passion, towered aloft unmoved, making the people look smaller than they did anywhere else in the friendly city. Menozzi, the stage-manager, at once perceived that in such a setting the crowd would be most effective if massed together and not spread over a wide area. So he formed his five hundred into a solid square, close to the Loggia dei Lanzi, which was important from a strategic point of view, and in front of the main entrance of the Government Palace. Guerra and Scaletterra took up their position between Bandinelli's extravagant stone statue of Hercules and Cacus, and Michelangelo's wonderful David. The crowd that had followed from San Frediano was skilfully grouped in the centre of the Piazza. Right and left of the main entrance stood a thin line of the recently formed carabinieri, who were fairly popular, with their carbines peacefully shouldered. Many windows of the palace were illumined. As Menozzi wished to open the scene in a dignified manner and had tested the effect of his method,

he began to intone the Pius hymn. The Piazza instantly sprang to life.

The Council of State, the members of which were a little nervous, had unanimously agreed to rob the demonstrators of their power to spread rebellion by a prompt and unconditional acceptance of their demands and had entrusted the Prime Minister and Caminer with the negotiations. The news that had arrived during the last half-hour to the effect that, contrary to expectation, the petitioners had just marched to the Grand Duke's palace, caused some consternation, and the increasing disturbance on the Piazza, the sinister sounds of which grew ever louder and louder in the conference chamber, formed an ugly accompaniment to deliberations on matters of high political import. But the Council's conciliatory attitude, the general respect in which the person of the Prime Minister was held, and the latter's perfect calm offered some hope of a satisfactory conclusion to the ill-omened business.

Presently Don Vacca put his head into the room, and Caminer immediately went out. Throughout the Abate's report the Bargello remained grave, even when he was told of the Prince's call to the rebels, the laugh with which Guerra had greeted it, and the confused *Vivas!* from the Piazza.

"It is diamond cut diamond," he observed, "the drama cannot end happily, for at heart both sides are devoid of humour—just as I am."

"Do you hear?" Lionello inquired. "They are coming. Guerra, by the bye, as far as one can tell, has not changed much."

The moving torches threw a strange glow from the Uffizi Gallery. Caminer raised the point of his red beard with his hand, and Don Lionello, who knew his master, exclaimed familiarly:

"Madda is certainly not in Livorno. I cannot understand your clemency."

"Clemency—wrong, quite wrong," replied the Bargello, somewhat enigmatically, and went back to the council-chamber.

"Gentlemen," he said, while he was still at the door, "the petitioners are coming; incidentally they are patriots who are merely demonstrating in favour of a Civic Guard. Even our Sovereign Lord, as far as I know, has not vetoed the proposal. Therefore we can with clean consciences, and without any feelings of constraint, accept the demand, which, as you are well aware, forms part of the reform program for the next six months."

"If we decide to form this Civic Guard immediately, I think it will be all the better," observed the Prime Minister in low tones, and, as he raised his calm face, the Pius hymn rang out. He immediately sprang to his feet. He knew that the less time he gave the demonstrators to carry out their public program and spread themselves, the easier it would be to control the situation. Caminer went up to him and gently touched his arm.

"The best place would be your office, would it not, your Excellency? Let me take you there."

The blind man recognized the Bargello at the first touch, at the very sound of his footstep, and recoiled slightly with aversion. Caminer, who noticed this, screwed up his eyes, and a crafty expression entered his face. But his only emotion for the moment was one of chagrin. The older he grew, the more difficult did he find it to put up with the universal detestation in which he was held. He had built special hopes on the blind Minister, for as the latter could not see his ugliness, he might possibly treat him kindly and not turn aside with loathing like everybody else. But he was doomed to immediate disappointment. The blind man had looked at him with a sort of shudder in his white skin. Caminer, however, had a sneaking regard for him, as he had for all noble and beautiful creatures. Moreover, he had a high opinion of his abilities and character. And now as he nerved himself not to withdraw his hand, he experienced the profound humiliation of having it, as it were, accidentally brushed away by the Minister.

"I have made up my mind," said the latter, "to go to the

Piazza myself and invite the leader of the petitioners to an interview. So it would be better for you not to accompany me, dear Baron. You surely know . . .”

Caminer did know. He was so heartily detested—on the whole without much reason, solely on account of his official position and personal appearance—that an attempt on his life would have surprised no one, least of all himself. For weeks every time he went out, even on the short drive from the Bargello to the Government Palace, he had done so at the risk of death. He knew it, but it never entered his head to take any precautions. His indifference was due neither to bravery nor to a longing for death. On the contrary, he not only clung to life, but he was as supremely confident as Guerra himself, if not more so.

He set no store by his own courage, although he appreciated courage in others. Guerra's behaviour delighted him; he admired him like a specially gifted gladiator, although he had already proved himself the stronger in battle and saw plain signs of a second and final duel in the near future. He was also pleased by the resistance offered by the Grand Duke, of whom he thought far more highly than the latter himself did. And now he was so deeply stirred by the shrewd and daring resolve of the Prime Minister that he shook his head in silence and pursed his lips in the most revolting manner.

The blind man had quietly beckoned to his secretary, a cultured young seminarist, who had been sitting modestly in the background; and, taking his arm, went out with faltering steps. The Councillors rose to their feet in respectful silence, all much relieved. Caminer followed the Prime Minister and his secretary to the top of the grand staircase and waited.

The stage-manager, Menozzi, who, as was only natural, wished to make the grand scene as effective as possible, fixed the order of the speakers while the Pius hymn was still in progress. He himself was to speak first, Scaleterra, whom he urged to be brief and not too learned, second, and last of all,

Guerra. Whereupon he sprang up the steps to the Loggia and, adopting an imposing attitude, surrounded by a blaze of torches, began to roar above the hymn-singing, which went on verse after verse. At last his voice drowned the uproar and put the melody to flight. His torrent of words increased in volume, surged over their heads, and submerged even the avalanche of applause they gave him; for it was his delight, or his first principle of oratory, never to pause. Big words rolled tempestuously from his mouth and seemed to play havoc with his huge beard. The capacious sleeves of the monkish robe which he wore on this occasion, flapped aloft like wings whenever he bellowed out the items on the program of the demonstrators—National Independence, Holy War, Civic Guard, United Italy! He looked like some raving recluse. But he was effective.

The blind Minister, led by his secretary, emerged from the main entrance and, standing still, listened attentively. He nodded emphatically as each item on the program rang out. Guerra, who was not far from him, though a few steps lower down, kept his eyes fixed upon him. Menozzi also looked at him and noticed the way he nodded. With the presence of mind of the gifted demagogue he mingled with his final apotheosis of Guerra a few words of homage for the venerable, intelligent, and liberal-minded head of the Government, who was standing there—look at him!—nodding his approval of the just demands of the people.

A faint smile suffused the blind man's face, and he carelessly advanced a few steps, amid the tumult of applause. The name of his ancient family, which was not shouted for the first time on the Piazza, sounded like bronze beside the steely name of the Leader. The words had pleased him, if only for musical reasons. Even the frenzied Piazza pleased him, and the crowd's eager attention, which seemed to be wafted over his brow like an exotic breeze. Something akin to the joy of the leader made his skin tingle. His other senses gave him a remarkably favourable impression of the blustering monk,

and, as his secretary halted before Guerra and Scaletterra, and he immediately became aware of the two men standing apart from the crowd, he made a friendly gesture with his free hand.

"But," he observed gently, "that was surely not Signor Guerra who was speaking just now?"

"No," replied Guerra, feeling flattered by the question, "it was the famous Father Menozzi, your Excellency."

"But you are Signor Guerra?"

"Yes."

The blind man reached out to him and grasped his hand. Possibly—at least so thought Scaletterra, who had kept cool—the gesture was meant for the crowd. Or it may have been prompted by an unaccustomed feeling of pleasure at being in such a conspicuous position, as it were on a stage that could be seen from the cheapest seats, which the blind man's imagination exaggerated and which urged him to this piece of obvious symbolism.

"My friend Scaletterra here may, I trust, be present at the little interview you are granting me?" said Guerra with some embarrassment.

"Signor Scaletterra," repeated the blind man, turning to face him as though he could see him, "but most certainly. I beg you both to come to my room."

Making an elaborate gesture with his hand, he pressed his secretary's arm and turned back towards the entrance. And now once again, as he was withdrawing from his brief appearance on the scene, he imagined he could feel a much greater number of eyes upon his spare back than was actually the case. For at a word from Menozzi, Guerra had sprung on to the plinth of the statue of David and, brandishing his torches, had captured the attention of the whole Piazza. The mob, who were as easily distracted as children, and utterly incapable of fidelity, were no longer looking at the Minister's back, but at the great Leader, whose torches were almost caressing David's lithe white legs.

"Comrades," cried Guerra in a voice that carried right across the Piazza, "things are going well. Patience!"

Scaleterra glanced up in surprise. The statue of David looked as though it were standing behind the speaker like the benign spirit of all that was beautiful and courageous in the night. What a background for a rebel! Was Guerra aware of it, and was that why he had sprung up there and not in front of the insignificant Hercules or on to the main steps of the Government building? And although he was perhaps no longer a conscious actor, and although the blind nobleman, with all his timidity and lack of practice, had succeeded in adopting an appropriate attitude in the presence of the mob, the question was where, in the man who knew all eyes were upon him, did the impulse to produce an effect begin and the soul's shyness end? Perhaps Guerra was a demagogic genius, he thought, because in public he had no diffidence and unconsciously obtained his effects by natural impulse rather than by doing violence to his feelings. In any case, as a public man he remained an enigma.

The Prime Minister too stopped short at the sound of Guerra's words and turned his head to the left.

"Where is he standing, then?" he asked his secretary.

"In front of the David," the young man replied, deeply moved by the whole scene. "And from here it looks as though the statue were speaking."

The blind man said nothing, but stood waiting. Guerra and Scaleterra came quickly up to him.—"That's the man," thought the blind Minister to himself, "the man whose step is the louder and shorter of the two"; and he turned his face towards the Leader.

"Pray forgive the delay, your Excellency," said Guerra apologetically, "but it was a matter of keeping them quiet for a while."

"Of course, of course," replied the Minister with a nod, and they entered the palace. Caminer was still standing on the landing of the first floor. He did not move. But on the last

step the blind Minister looked up, his eyebrows working like antennæ, and, pressing his secretary's arm, as though he were frightened, he stopped still.

"May I be allowed to introduce Signori Guerra and Scalعتها to his Highness's Commissioner of State and Chief of Police, Baron Caminer?" he asked after a moment's pause.

Although he was well aware that the three men had been known to each other for a very long time, that is what he said, and he gave a cryptic smile.

"Oh," exclaimed Guerra quite naturally, "we all know each other very well."

Caminer was conscious of the secret alliance of the trio against himself. He was accustomed to everybody being in league against his person, but as the evening advanced, the knowledge mortified him. He had intended to be friendly, but the world forced him into antagonism. Bowing stiffly, he joined the group without saying a word.

The Prime Minister's room was the one in which in the old days the aged del Monte had with more intellect than strength shown his detestation of the stumpy Bargello. It was a spacious apartment whose chief adornment was a fine old *cinquecento* writing-table. Caminer had no love for it, because it had preserved the spirit of that cultured social resistance from which he had suffered all his life, and he remained mistrustfully standing at the door. The blind Minister asked to be led to the writing-table, and, installing himself with a certain assurance in his chair, he leant his head, slightly raised, against its tall wooden back and made a sign to the two emissaries to be seated.

"I am in the happy position," he began in formal tones, "of being able to tell you that the Council of State decided to form a Civic Guard at their last sitting; the decree will be signed by the Grand Duke in the course of a few days."

"We shall be very glad to convey the good news to Livorno," replied Guerra.

There was a moment's silence, during which Guerra was able to contemplate the sightless white face against the brown carved back of the chair. The blind man's eyebrows were working as though he were conscious of the scrutiny to which he was being subjected.

"Perhaps," he continued after a while in low tones, "I may venture to suggest, Signor Guerra, that the law for the formation of a Civic Guard, which would, I am inclined to think, have been passed even without your intervention, has only served you as a pretext. Possibly that is too drastic a term. But what I mean is that the object of your march on Florence seems to me to have been more in the nature of a trial of strength—a sort of dress rehearsal—than undertaken with the object of presenting a petition."

The two popular leaders, no less than Caminer, were somewhat taken aback at the turn the conversation had taken. They had assumed it would be confined to formal matters, as its initiation on the Piazza had led them to expect. Guerra grew cautious.

"Is it really necessary, Marchese," he inquired, "for me to answer the remark you have just made?"

The blind man smiled calmly once more.

"No, not necessary," he rejoined, "particularly as you will have very good reasons for not telling me the truth. But I should like you to do so, nevertheless; because, quite apart from what has happened on the Piazza, I sympathize with the movement, and feel a sort of personal anxiety that it should not force the pace and spoil everything by taking no account of certain *imponderabilia*."

"I do not believe that we shall force the pace as a movement," replied Guerra, "for time itself regulates that. And you will probably be ready to acknowledge my experience in such matters. As regards the question of pace, for that, at all events, I acquired a feeling on Elba."

Whether this reference to his personal experiences, which the Minister had so far shrewdly avoided, was only a casual move

in the game, or was really intended to introduce a sharper tone into the discussion, Scaleterra, who was listening attentively and somewhat anxiously, did not venture to guess. The blind man merely nodded faintly, but said nothing.

"And if," Guerra continued, after a long pause, "you understand by *imponderabilia* the general relationship of the Grand Duke to Austria, far from not taking this into account, we see in it precisely the occasion — why should I not be quite plain? — for war or peace between ourselves and the present Government."

The pale face framed by the back of the chair did not stir. Scaleterra considered Guerra's aggressiveness uncalled for, and his nose twitched nervously. The Bargello at the door pursed his lips, so that his moustache and beard met.

"That is only a part of the *imponderabilia*," replied the Minister, speaking in even lower tones, "— the lesser part, which we can more easily define. But more important still — much more important —"

He stopped and looked anxiously towards the Bargello, through his closed eyelids. For Caminer was showing his teeth — he was actually grinning. When he saw that the blind man had stopped short on his account — his uncanny powers of divination apparently making him aware of everything about him and telling him where Caminer was standing grinning — the latter immediately became serious, and his brow clouded angrily. Planting his legs firmly apart, he rudely broke the silence.

"The Imperial and Royal Army!" he exclaimed. "If you were sitting here tomorrow, Signor Guerra, the Austrians would be out there the day after!"

And he pointed to the Piazza, from which a muffled murmur rose. The noise made by the crowd outside, which belonged to him and lent him strength, calmed Guerra's wildly beating heart.

"And where shall you be on that day, my Lord Caminer?" he rapped out, looking straight at the Bargello.

Caminer made no reply. But, strangely enough, the blind Minister answered for him.

"Where you will expect him to be, Signor Guerra."

Caminer glanced from one to the other, but still said nothing.

"Besides, Baron Caminer's reasoning is false," continued Guerra, turning to the Minister, "quite apart from the fact that he suspects a wrong motive for my ambition. The truth is rather the reverse—that is to say, if the Austrians were to invade Tuscan territory, the people would rise to arms and call on me. Do you not see, your Excellency, that our movement has become acute only because the Austrians are in Ferrara?" Then turning sharply to face the Bargello, he added: "It is possible, my Lord President, that you really do not know that our Party has been waiting for years for an act of intervention on the part of Austria which would provoke the country, so that at last . . ."

"What an excellent example!" cried Caminer enigmatically. Guerra alone understood him and turned pale.

"I am sorry for what I said," interposed the Minister, his voice sounding far away, "for I was aware of our conflicting views beforehand. As for the thoughts behind the mind of the Commissioner of State, there is no need for me to know them. Nevertheless, allow me to inform you, Signor Guerra, that hitherto Baron Caminer has most ably supported me in my position as mediator between the Sovereign and the Nationalists. And if, Signor Guerra, you succeed in keeping the masses in check, as you have today, and induce the Liberals, who are the strongest party in Florence, just as the Radicals are in your own town of Livorno, to oppose violence on the part of Austria without having recourse to rebellion or chaos, I believe things can still be settled peacefully."

Caminer was again standing indifferently at the door, as though nothing the Minister said concerned him. At last Scaleterra, who had been silent, opened his mouth.

"If the Grand Duke, even at this late hour, can emulate

the Pope and the King of Piedmont in introducing reforms, he can still win the day."

The Minister nodded.

"Very good!" remarked Caminer. "For Tuscany has the good fortune to possess in Guerra the most humane of the Nationalist leaders. And humanity is a splendid thing."

Guerra and Scaleterra gazed at him in silent amazement, and the blind Minister also turned his all-seeing brow towards him. The Bargello was perfectly serious.

"A splendid thing indeed!" the Minister murmured. "Blessed be he who understandeth it, my Lord President!"

"Blessed be he!" repeated Caminer, raising his red eyes. "But woe to him if people do not credit him with it! For history loves to create her monsters out of such unbelievers. — Yes," he continued, changing his tone and shifting his weight on to the other leg, "and you have quite forgotten, your Excellency, to tell the gentlemen the most interesting and certainly most gratifying thing of all, a piece of news which is as good as a second petition — that you are at work on framing a constitution for the State, which was suggested to you by your own conscience, not by the Prince, who . . ."

The blind man raised his hands deprecatingly, but immediately let them drop again.

"That is still — yes, yes," he said calmly, obviously taken aback. "Shall you make use of the news politically, Signor Guerra?"

"Not if you do not wish it," replied Guerra.

"If you can ward off any disaster by so doing, or wish to do so, you are at liberty —"

And the blind man turned his face towards the Bargello and said no more.

Hoarse, drunk with victory, and dead tired, the petitioners marched away, Menozzi leading them by the shortest route

to San Frediano. As the Bargello could not be trusted, they could not be quartered in the town. The gate stood open and the men bivouacked in the square outside it, sleeping on straw provided by the people of the neighbourhood, and arranging their wagons in a square about them, like a mediæval camp composed of chariots.

A carriage was found to convey Guerra and Scaletterra, who were also dead tired, out of the town. On leaving the Government Palace, Guerra had been called upon to address the crowd once more and was all the more resolutely silent now.

"I wonder why that red-headed fellow assumed the airs of a Liberal," Scaletterra inquired as though he were speaking to himself. Guerra shrugged his shoulders. "For the simple reason," Scaletterra continued, "that he does not wish to be left out in the cold."

"Possibly," replied Guerra.

"But he ought to be left out," declared his companion emphatically.

"Who could leave him out?" Guerra asked absent-mindedly.

"Why, you, when you come into power."

Guerra did not answer. The journey seemed endless. The town was buried in sleep. When a grey shaft of light fell from the miserable street-lamps into the carriage, Scaletterra saw that Guerra's face was much more awake and alert than his sleepy answers seemed to warrant.

"Are you disappointed, Gasto?" he asked.

"Disappointed? How could I be? . . . Oh, I see, I was not thinking of politics any longer. Politics are always disappointing — besides, hang it all — *imponderabilia!*"

And he laughed.

"But frankly, Guerra," Scaletterra proceeded after a while, "you don't like my sitting here and acting as an involuntary supervisor of your conduct, do you?"

"What are you driving at?" Guerra replied, with a laugh.

"The child is not waiting for me, nor is she accustomed to

leaving her door open. I hope she knows nothing, absolutely nothing! She does not even know my name; at that time I was called something else, and she may have forgotten the other name—and perhaps not. . . . What was my name in those days? ”

“We start off at five in the morning,” said Scaleterra.

“I’ve got it!” cried Guerra. “Carlo Malossi — Sor Carlo!”

“Who is that? ”

“Why, I — what I was to her!”

“We start off at five in the morning.”

“Yes, I shall too, why not? I shall walk very slowly. I wonder whether it will be a fine morning. I am going to Fiesole. Make up some mysterious excuse for Menozzi about it. He is the right fellow for that sort of thing and will tell every one of the five hundred that I am conferring with the Grand Duke. And you wait for me somewhere along the road to Pisa — but not before Pontedera, where you might let the men have a few hours’ rest in the middle of the day. And leave the carriage there for me. I shall be with you again about lunch time.”

“But . . . ”

“And now leave me in peace, Scaleterra! Who will ever recognize me in the daylight and outside the town? And even if they should, what can it matter? ” —

At dawn the sky was clear, and green as an emerald. The hills lay under a film of silver and blue. The rising sun capriciously picked out a couple of white villas, a hill top, a group of cypresses, and the white wall of a park, making them gleam through the haze. The birches along the Arno, those trees of the morning, showed the men of the dawn, the men with the clear bright eyes, the wondrous kinship of their slim white lives with the slim white flight and trill of the larks. The visible pillars of heat did not yet bear down the city.

Guerra had skirted the town. From the little inn outside the Porta San Frediano, where he and Scaleterra had spent the night, he had taken a short cut to the Arno, crossed to the

Cascine by the ferry, and, passing by the Porta al Prato, walked along the city wall. When he could no longer control his impatience, he took a lift in the first peasant cart that overtook him, and drove as far as the Porta San Gallo, where he hired a fly from a livery stable.

He drove slowly up the steep road to San Domenico, enclosed by park walls on either side. The sky was already a deep blue, and the sun quite warm. On the box in front of him the driver, an old man with a round back, stole snatches of sleep from time to time. Staring at the shabby coat covering the curved back in front of him — an ugly greenish brown coat, which had once been black — he counted and counted. She had been fourteen or fifteen then and must now be thirty or thirty-one. Perhaps she was no longer alive; but on such a morning death seemed to have no meaning. At the end of the road, above the Convent of San Domenico, soared the hill of Fiesole, brown, gold, and green, studded with red and white houses, dark lance-like rows of cypresses, and grey-green olive-trees. Higher up, in a sort of small trough, stood the Cathedral and higher yet, on the very crest, the Franciscan monastery, which looked like a castle. Everything was the same as it had always been; death had played no part here. And what about himself, the man, the horseman of time — was he still young? Did only those people grow old whom time dragged along with it? And if this were so, this child, his own creature, differentiated from the rest by the distant power of his love and branded with his promise, would have waited for him and remained beautiful.

The half-starved old horse, which like its driver was bent, sleepy, and listless, made his heart bleed. Telling the fly to wait for him in San Domenico, he climbed the steep scorching road. The Florentine plain sank away behind him, with its houses, towers, and row upon row of hills. Had he turned round, he would have seen only the dome of the Cathedral soaring with him. But he paid no heed to the increasingly clear melody of the city at his back, nor did he notice the sun or

the steep road he was climbing. Like a man in a dream or slightly touched, he was trying to picture the strange little creature's life, and place it in its proper relation to his own. She would have waited and remained beautiful. That was the chief thing. She could not have fallen in love, married, and borne children, because she knew he would come back as he had promised. She would probably have spent her days ironing, as her mother did, working in the house and singing songs, as she used to do. He would enter the house in Borgunto, go down the steps, and find her standing on the wooden gallery of the courtyard. She would see him, say little, and, without either laughing or crying, kiss him and walk with him down the old street. He would hold her gently by the arm to prevent her from slipping; the wretched old horse down below would have two passengers to carry, but it would be downhill all the way. Then after a while they would reach the long road to Pisa. They would have much to say to each other, or they might be quite silent. In Pontedera they would tell Menozzi, with a shameless little twinkle in their eyes, that they had met accidentally, and she would be introduced as a fellow rebel—the simplest explanation. The shrewd Scaleterra would shake his hand and would immediately be asked to witness their marriage, and his old nose would twitch and he would say: "When?"—And the answer would be "As soon as possible!" This would help Madda to overcome her trouble more easily. "You understand, *amico*?"—And the devil too, the Governor of Livorno, would be the second witness—yes, dear little Maria Pia!

On reaching the Piazzale of Fiesole, he allowed the cool wind to freshen his brow for a while. There was always a breeze up there! A one-armed flower-vendor, with the face of a vulture, who was still busy filling and arranging her basket for the day, scented a victim in the early visitor and quickly bound up an armful of autumn roses.—Yes, very well, he would take them; he wanted to arrive laden with flowers. And thus he climbed the steep road to Borgunto. But he saw only

strange faces, nothing but strange faces. Seventeen years was a long time.—Here was the house, his house, her house, and the steps down to the courtyard. But she was not standing on the balcony. There was no one there. He knocked at the door behind which he had once lived. A strange old woman, poorly clad and reeking of a dirty bed, opened the door and looked angrily at him.

“Where is Maria Pia?” he asked roughly.

“Who is that?”

“Maria Pia!”

And then for the first time he remembered that he did not know her surname. The old woman banged the door in his face. He was angry and began to shout. Some women came along, and a couple of men — strangers, all strangers.

“Where is Maria Pia?” Nobody knew anything about her. The daughter of the ironer? An ironer was summoned. But she had no daughter named Maria Pia. The extraordinary man inspired them with a certain respect. And all the Marias in the place were marshalled together — children, grown women, and grandmothers — all strangers. Escorted by a crowd of women and children, Guerra hurried to the Town Hall and roused a surly official from his morning slumbers.

“I want to know where I can find the ironer and her daughter, Maria Pia, who in the year 1831 occupied number 27 in the Borgunto.”

The official stared at him.

“Who are you, may I ask?”

“That has nothing to do with it. Can you tell me what I want to know or not?”

“It will be difficult if you cannot give me more precise details. But, in the first place, tell me who you are.”

Guerra became grave, gave a name, and, with a scoffing remark, left the place. Against the railings of the Town Hall, which commands a full view of the Piazzale, a number of people had already collected. Guerra went down into the square with the flowers still in his arms.

“Do you know who that is?” a young working-man asked his mates. — “It is Guerra.”

They laughed at him.

Near the seminary a pretty girl of about fourteen or fifteen was arranging straw goods on a stall. A man with a bewildered expression on his face dashed up to her and, throwing an armful of flowers at her feet, hurried away down the steep street. She gazed after him and thanked him with a radiant smile; but this he did not see.

CONSTITUTIONS

I

PEOPLE, at all events the majority of them, do not keep abreast of their times, and certainly neither the Pope, the *Re Tentenna*, nor the Grand Duke did so. Neither in the history of nations nor in the crises of men's lives is there such a thing as perfect balance between fate and action. Time and again the few who are abreast of their times — the *Capo, Guerra* — when they are alone or trying to sleep, have a sense of terror, of danger, and feel the loneliness of the apocalyptic vanguard. Behind them their followers grow confused and anxious and want to apply the brakes. The Pope was the first to see that the Chair of St. Peter could not be set on the wheels of revolutionary propaganda and pushed along from time to time by people whom he had not summoned, did not know, and did not wish to know — by people whose breath still reeked of the blasphemies they had just uttered. The Pope was beginning to suspect that behind the hymns and myths of Pius, as behind the artificial beauty and peace of a leafy embrasure, the most formidable guns were being laid against his temporal sovereignty. A United Italy could have no more respect for his ecclesiastical polity than it had for the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. A handful of exceedingly clever men in Vienna told him this even more plainly than it is here stated, and reminded him of the great past of the Imperial Apostolic Protective Power and her right to the maintenance of the Holy tradition. Pio Nono began to apply the brakes. To the ever more insistent demands for a temporal majority in his Council of State — what could this mean except the end of priestly rule? — he began to turn an ever more reluctant ear. He no longer showed compliance. The skilful Austrian slogan "The Holy Father degraded into

an Italian Caliph! " burnt like red-hot iron into his pontifical breast. He no longer showed compliance. The Strong Man in Vienna had keen ears, and now, to the accompaniment of upheavals and unrest, he allowed the European storm which had arisen from the Ferrara incident and had brought a strong French fleet to the Gulf of Naples, ready to help the Pope, to spread in all directions — not to the advantage of monarchy. All the better if the situation were prolonged into the new year! The Strong Man in Vienna had keen ears and also fear in his heart. Most men were afraid; for they were beginning to feel the approaching hurricane of the great year, which could not be postponed, though each clung, as was only human, to the little streak of blue sky which he fancied was still visible.

1848 was at hand!

The gifted *Capo* gradually let it be known that the myth and hymn of Pius were no more innocuous than the *Robespierriades* and the *Marseillaise* had been in their day. He had so long made capital out of the Pope's patronage of the Nationalist cause that the arm of Rome, which had been forced willy-nilly to respond, grew weak, and Nono was, as it were, compelled to go over to the Opposition. But now the carefully arranged moment was at hand to raise an agitation, and exploit the Pope for the ends of Radicalism, and at the same time differentiate his own Cause in the sharpest possible manner from that of Rome, and even of the moderate Liberals, who made a red-letter day out of the granting of the most insignificant reform and were inclined to compromise. The *Capo*, therefore, wrote his famous November letter to the Pope, informing him that if he did not place himself at the head of the National movement, the latter would abandon the Cross and go its own way. He spoke with apparent daring and finality, accurately reflecting the spirit of the era he represented, but of whose speedy victory he was by no means convinced. For he knew human nature better than Guerra did, who, like all men of action, was inclined to over-estimate the momentum of

contemporary history in its effect upon his fellows and upon their energy and wills. The *Capo*, throwing all caution to the winds, wrote his warning against any sort of patronage. "The illusion will slowly but surely fade; the hour is at hand when the people will begin to see that if they wish to become a nation they must do so by their own unaided efforts."

On the eve of this political manifesto the most pompous of French poets embraced him for these words.

"At last! At last!" he cried. "That is the prologue to the Twilight of the Idols!"

"What do you mean?" asked the *Capo*, who was sensitive to such outbursts. "If things go well, it is the prologue to the twentieth century."

Throughout this period he was strangely depressed after hours of frenzied night work.

"Men of our type," he observed to Madda, "should be much readier to commit suicide when the confounded march of history does not keep pace with them. Such a proof of despair brings the indolent masses, who always stagger along a generation behind and only react to brutal facts, a good step forward and accomplishes at least as much as five years of so-called Party work or a semi-revolution. Or one can wait a little longer and let oneself be shot by the reaction. And that is as good as ten years of Party work or a real revolution."

"You can't mean that quite seriously," she replied, somewhat agitated. "Or you mean it differently. Men of our type? You are not thinking of yourself so much as of Guerra. Incidentally, you have not exactly helped him with your open letter. You have literally stirred up the opposition of the Liberals—which means the Florentines."

The *Capo* glanced at her with his sharp little eyes.

"I was not referring to myself precisely," he said roughly, "that is perfectly true. I shall never have the courage to commit suicide. I have no personal courage whatever; the most I have is literary courage, such as was possessed in a wider sense by that great man Calvin, whom, particularly from the moral

point of view, I in no way resemble. I possess the capacity for a peculiar kind of suffering — the capacity for waiting. Yes, I was referring to Guerra, who, in spite of his great demagogic gifts, is in some ways simple-minded, because he has the soul of a hero. Like all men who are *condottieri* by nature, he confounds his stormy approach to his object with the object itself, annihilation with construction, and death with resurrection. As a matter of fact, in the most favourable circumstances, one does follow out of the other. But most favourable circumstances are rare. As a rule, revolutions are followed by reaction."

"In short," she insisted, "you are frightened for him!"

"Frightened! Frightened!" he cried roughly. "Men of his type are not in the world for their own sakes. I should take very good care not to be frightened for a life which is worth ten revolutions. But . . ." he cried, bringing his hand heavily down on the sheets, "I love him!" And laying his hand on her face, he touched her moist eyes. "In saying that I spoke for you as well, Madda," he added softly.

She lifted his hand from her face.

"And in your currency how much do you value his life at?" she groaned.

"It will mean bringing our goal ten years nearer," he replied gently. "It may mean that Italy will be liberated and united twenty years sooner, or ten years after his death."

Guerra was not downcast, for the courage the times demanded destroyed any signs of faint-heartedness in him. But he had grown all the harder; for though he was disillusioned, he was resolved to remain true in his way to the illusion he loved. As a politician, a popular leader, and a pioneer of the new Age of conflict, he was no longer a prey to his own feelings. On his return from Florence he had spent a whole night between the brightly polished mahogany walls of his Grand-ducal cabin, struggling against the temptation to allow Madda to accompany him, as a protest against the insolent decrees of his destiny. In the end, for Madda's sake, he had decided in

the negative and turned out the light in order to obliterate from the bright narrow walls about him the images of Madda and Maria Pia, which they seemed mystically and with evil magic to reflect like twin souls. But the next day he dispassionately came to the just conclusion that there were no practical objections to his desire to have about him people who were both devoted and familiar, and after a few words with the Governor he telegraphed to his two old soldiers, telling them that they might join him without fear. A few days later Orestes and Othello presented themselves, stepping with such military firmness and happy zeal into the cabin that the yacht shook a little. Othello, who had the profoundest loathing for sea-craft, turned pale, and looked askance at the round port-hole. Nevertheless, as he did so, he bellowed forth his greeting, which he had been composing for the last fortnight, without giving his sceptical colleague an inkling of it, and which conveyed everything—his love for his master, his military habits of mind, and his knowledge of French:

“With you to the death now, *mon général!*”

Orestes was indeed defeated, and with a sharp twist of his head he fixed his sound eye on his companion without saying a word. Guerra laughed.

“Well, well, my old friend,” he cried, “and where are my epaulets, if you please?”

“I can see them all right, Sor Gasto,” Othello assured him enthusiastically, “and if I look closely enough, I can see the field-marshal’s baton in your hand.”

This was too much for Orestes.

“Hold your tongue!” he cried, making a respectful gesture of apology to Guerra. “On the way here he must have lost what little sense he had left, Signor Guerra,” he added plaintively. “He has talked himself into the idea of taking part in a lovely war, because in 1815 he happens to have participated in a wretched travesty of the real thing. There was no blood to be seen on that occasion; only a few shots fired into the air. The only blood this Sienese fool has ever seen was at

that bull-slaughtering show in Arles, and he's been dreaming about it ever since."

"But blood is only lovely, Othello," observed Guerra gravely, "when it remains invisible. Or did you enjoy the sight of that wretched bull's blood in Arles? Tell me frankly, Othello!"

"*Dio!*" exclaimed the bravo, struggling with his emotion, "it certainly had its—Sor Gasto—it certainly moved me . . . but it was not lovely, no!"

"It seems to me," said Orestes, the thinker, closing the discussion, "that there'll be nothing lovely about things here."

Guerra nodded. The one-eyed man proved eminently right. Even the innumerable festivals, which the excited populace managed to introduce between their successes and their fresh demands, and between all the rumours, threats, hopes, and increasingly wild prophecies of the brotherhood, were, with all their noise and display of colour, not very entertaining. Menozzi's grand staging of the celebrations in honour of the formation of a Civic Guard in Livorno, which an English journalist described as "revolutionary bacchanalia," and which bore no sort of relation to the matter-of-fact institution itself, raged in the streets for three whole days like a sinister carnival—crude, politically intolerant, and utterly wanting in southern gaiety. It cost the lives of five people and the health of at least fifty more. Of the five dead, one was the victim of an accident at a symbolical display of fireworks. The four others were murdered—three of them being stabbed and the other shot. The one who was shot was a Jesuit, the steward of a Pisan nobleman. The three others, who could not be identified, were, according to Menozzi, Florentine spies. And it was in this connexion that Menozzi learnt to know Guerra in a new light. When the latter asked him whether one of the murderers belonged to the organized forces of the Party and could be arrested, the reverend Father, who did not like the look in Guerra's face, gave a vague reply.

"Menozzi," said Guerra softly, gazing into his startled eyes, "anyone can have a knife, but not everybody can have a pistol.

If the man who fired the shot does not report to me before tonight, you will be summoned before the Party tribunal."

That evening the reverend Father presented himself with a short, snub-nosed, dangerous-looking fellow. Menozzi had unscrupulously given the man to understand that his interview with Guerra was an honour. The stony-featured Leader, the demigod, was leaning against the white-enamelled mainmast of the yacht and did not look as though he were about to mete out praise, and the man's jaw dropped when, behind him, Guerra's two old soldiers pulled in the plank by which he had come aboard, and, with sloped arms, took up menacing positions left and right of the mainmast. Standing silently by, Father Menozzi's beard stuck out as though the wind were blowing it.

"Your name?" inquired Guerra.

"Juan Sambra."

"Of Spanish origin?"

"I don't know. I am a native of Livorno."

"Were you drunk when you shot the Abate—were you drunk, Juan?"

"Why does he ask me that twice?" the fellow wondered; "for I really was not drunk. . . ."

"On my oath, I was not drunk, Signore."

Father Menozzi was breathing heavily. The Leader, a dark figure in front of the white mast, shrugged his shoulders more than ever.

"Had you had a quarrel with him?"

"No."

"Then why did you shoot him?"

"Because he was a Jesuit and was trying to spy on us."

Up to this point the Leader's barely audible voice had struck the man as strange. It was so different from the great Guerra's tenor in public. The next moment, however, the voice rose to its familiar steely pitch.

"A damned threadbare excuse for murder, Juan!"

The only consolation the culprit could find in the sharp

menacing tone was in the use of the last word—his name. The demigod still called him by his name—nevertheless. . . .

“Revolution . . . Signore,” he murmured.

“And what about the hole in the back of his head?” came the clear voice. “Do you carry on your revolution, Juan, against unsuspecting backs? Am I the leader of a gang of assassins?”

The man was silent.

“And what do you imagine the punishment will be, Juan?”

The man felt the ground give way beneath his feet. He could find but little consolation now in the use of his name. Swaying from side to side, he thrust a foot forward and waved his hands.

“I am sorry,” he muttered.

“Very good,” rejoined Guerra. “And now you will go with my two men here to the examining magistrate and tell him you are sorry.”

The man’s heart seemed to sink into his boots, and he collapsed.

“No—no!” he begged.

“Very well,” continued Guerra, “then pick up your pistol again and shoot yourself. I know of no other fate for you, Juan.”

The man stood up with a blank expression on his face. Suddenly his knees began to jerk, and with three springs he was across the deck and over the side. The ghastly gurgle of the black water as it swallowed him down was the only sound to be heard. They all stood perfectly still like their master; or, rather, they did not move because he did not.

“I doubt very much,” said Menozzi in hollow tones, “whether he can swim.”

“I doubt it too,” replied Guerra calmly; and turning to Othello, whose teeth were chattering, though he was clenching them tightly, he added: “Oh, my old friend, there is no blood visible, and yet it is not a lovely war; no jolly soldiers to be seen!”

His companion, Orestes, was as milky white as his blind eye, which he had just opened. Forgetting his military rôle, he stepped forward, dragging his musket after him.

"Sor Gasto," he said softly, "if you had commanded me to shoot, I should not have done so."

"But I should not have commanded you to shoot, Orestes."

The one-eyed man jerked his head violently to the left, so as to avoid seeing his master.

"I should not have cared to swear to it, Signor Guerra. One never knows one's man."

Father Menozzi also had his own views about the great Guerra. Scaletterra was speaking in Pisa that day. When he returned, Menozzi told him what had happened.

"You must have known him some time. Would you have thought him capable of it?"

"Of course!" Scaletterra replied.

"If he is thinking of committing many more blunders of the sort, he will risk getting a bullet in the back of his own head. I wish you would explain that to him."

Scaletterra discussed the matter with Guerra. What would he have done in his place, the Leader inquired. — The same, yes; but what about a mutiny? — The artillery in the forts along the coast and the whole garrison would be mobilized at a word from Guerra to the Governor. To yield an inch to the violent temper of the gang would mean that their lust for murder would break bounds, and chaos would result. He had no intention of yielding by a hair's breadth. Scaletterra gazed at him for some moments.

"So you have had to leave your gaiety, your feeling of youth, and your cynicism behind in Florence, Gasto?"

"Yes," replied Guerra laconically. "All that is not part of me."

"Forgive me, Gasto," said Scaletterra, with a swift knowing glance, "but you ought not to be one of the commonplace personalities of history who turn their private disappointments into public brutality."

"No, I ought not," Guerra agreed simply.

The celebrations, as we have already observed, were not gay. Liberal Florence responded to Radical Livorno by giving a municipal festival, the spirit of which was more pleasing. There was a greater display of taste, and the unruly cursing and shouting mob were not in evidence. The actors and supernumeraries were collected from the *intelligenza* of all parts of Liberal Italy, politics were veiled in courtesy and loyalty, and the slogans of the Party were symbolically disguised. Yet both politics and slogans were necessarily present. Twenty thousand people marched past the Palazzo Pitti, where the Grand Duke remained standing on the terrace throughout the lengthy proceedings. It needed the exercise of but little intelligence on his part to recognize that the varying acclamations rising from the vast procession were even more forced than they had been on that memorable night when he had confronted the petitioners of Livorno. On that occasion, when he had been moved by other than political reasons, he had been able to play a by no means thankless or unmanly part towards the fateful personality of Guerra. But now he could do nothing except assume the undignified rôle of a grateful and somewhat ridiculous spectator. Down below, the ballet of United Italy was being performed, with cunning artistry, a riot of colour, perfectly grouped and rhythmically rehearsed. There were deputations from towns and States, in garish uniforms, with banners flying, triumphal allegorical groups of the various classes and professions, united in the sacred Cause, nobles and plebeians—who in private life would have liked to be nobles—soldiers, officers, students, literary men, priests, monks, patriotic spinsters, working-men, university professors, with flags flying, covered with emblems and symbols. They all stood out conspicuous in their beautifully ordered confusion, loudly and respectfully proclaiming their common will and heart, in colours, devices, songs, and cheers. The Grand Duke, trussed up in the uniform he so seldom wore, raised and dropped his hand to the salute like a puppet. His features were

as stiff as the rest of his body — indeed, the skin of his face felt as though it had been drawn tight over the bones of his face to his mouth and left taut. At last it was over. His legs stiff, his head buzzing, and his eyes smarting, he flung himself into the nearest arm-chair. Caminer, who was more accustomed to standing than the Prince, and who, from a post at the back of the terrace room, and relying on his trusty legs alone, had watched the procession, remained resolutely in his place, merely turning to face the Grand Duke.

"Well, and what next?" the latter inquired wearily. The Bargello's head swayed.

"Splendid!" he exclaimed. "Now let them carry on quietly, your Highness."

The Grand Duke looked slowly up at him.

"Caminer," he said softly, "for Heaven's sake, be frank with me for once. What do you expect to gain by all this extraordinary adaptability? Do you imagine for a moment that your opportunism will prevent the revolution?"

"No, your Highness," replied Caminer gravely. "But it may perhaps make it turn round on itself, as it has done before. I should like, according to the good old routine, to go back to our original starting-point, *via* Liberalism, Radicalism, Revolution, and Reaction. That constitutes the whole of my demoniacal philosophy."

"What, again this time?" the Prince ejaculated, thrusting his weak chin forward. "But I am afraid, Caminer, I myself will prove the spoil-sport."

Caminer shrugged his shoulders. One should only oppose when opposition was plainly indicated. For the present, everything was following its unpleasant but normal course. A Council of State and a Civic Guard — how simple, not to say useful! And now they were demanding Government reform and the abolition of the *Buon Governo* and of the spy system. Very good and simple — a Government consisting of the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, the blind man; the Ministry of Justice, War, and Finance, to be held by

the man who hitherto had been departmental chief, and the Ministry of the Interior, to which the head of the police would of course be attached, to be filled by himself. And, following the example set by France, the spies would be turned into the Criminal Investigation Department.

"And if," he concluded, "I should seem ridiculous to your Highness as 'your Excellency' then confine the title to your Prime Minister, who already bears it."

The Grand Duke gazed intently at him.

"I have known you for a long time, Caminer, and although I have never been very fond of you, you have served me well. But I have never been able to rid myself of the feeling that in your pocket you have a private reckoning of the injustice of my dislike which you will one day produce."

It seemed as though the Bargello had only just become conscious of how long he had been standing. For, going limply over to a chair, contrary to all Court etiquette, he sat down.

"Pardon, your Highness!" he murmured, sitting on one side, with his elbow on his knee and moving the point of his beard from side to side. For some time he said nothing, and the Prince waited calmly, feeling something akin to pity in his breast. The man's tragedy seemed to lie where he suspected, but apparently it had surprisingly deep gnarled roots. The hubbub on the Piazza was dying down, and the two men were already sitting in semi-darkness. The gold frames of the French masters on the walls and the gilt backs of the florid baroque arm-chairs had made their own sunset, while the last gleam of the dying day swung from side to side on the bright pendulum of the clock on the mantelpiece. The footman with the candlestick, his hands already covered with wax, was standing outside in the corridor not daring to move. His royal master had grown irritable of late, he mused, and difficult to deal with; and he bowed his head respectfully over the candle and continued his philosophizing.

"Little as you care for me," said Caminer, stammering in low tones, "and in spite of all my orders and decorations, is it

not, after all, true that your only feeling, apart from aversion — your only enduring feeling — is that I not only have the account in my pocket, but that I also belong to the other side; in short, your Highness, that I am a rebel in uniform and therefore much more dangerous than Signor Guerra, a little Brutus, or, since we are in Florence, which, like the Bible, teems with similes, a somewhat corpulent Lorenzaccio."

The Grand Duke smiled.

"I do not bear the remotest resemblance to Duke Alessandro, either as a tyrant or a libertine, so you won't be able to have me assassinated in the bed of some foreign courtesan, Caminer. But, as we happen to be talking quite openly, you are not so far wrong as regards the hidden rebel in your heart. Psychologically, of course, this is much too complicated to end in a daring *coup d'état*, or even in the tricolour. I believe that at bottom you are but moderately interested in politics, and that you are a rebel, let us say, out of boredom — which, by the bye, I feel better able to understand. At heart, no matter which side injustice may come from, both of us are innocent, or at least we think we are."

Caminer had sprung to his feet, his eyes starting out of his head. The Grand Duke's last words had forced him to his feet and drawn him forward. He drew nearer and tears swam in his eyes; but this his lord did not see. Dumbly gesticulating before uttering a word, consciously or unconsciously he gently stroked the Prince's hand as it lay on the arm of the chair before him.

"That's going a bit too far," he muttered at last in his beard. "You do not suspect, your Highness, how little it would take to win me — a gnawed bone flung under the table. . . ."

"Yes, yes," replied the Prince in low tones, strangely moved, "it is an extraordinary alliance and does not constitute an item on the program of the municipal festival. So let me tell you at once that I am prepared at least to make an attempt to destroy the Radical movement, if necessary with the help of

Liberalism. As long as I show resistance, Austria will support me. As long as I openly resist, I shall avoid the so-called National War, which the Pope no longer countenances, and which Piedmont will not wage alone. And so before the new year comes, with Heaven knows what surprises in store, and before the Liberals move any further to the Left, I wish to take a definite step now at once."

"Against the third innocent?" Caminer interposed. The Grand Duke looked up at him and nodded.

"Yes, against Guerra. Which of us three is going to lose the game with the unjust world?"

"He, you, I—all of us, of course; but he first. For he is in the most advanced position."

A mere surmise, observed the Prince thoughtfully; a mere expression of opinion, nothing more; perhaps only a consoling thought. He was of a different way of thinking. The coming year, 1848, was going to be very evil.

There was a timid knock at the door. The footman felt he could not wait any longer and brought in a light.

2

Guerra had left the Grand-ducal pleasure-yacht. The political friendship of the Governor, who, even before the promulgation of the new law, had of his own accord placed the Civic Guard under the command of the Leader, had been sufficiently proved to allow Guerra to accept his invitation to take up his quarters in his villa at Ardenza, a watering-place on the coast, a few miles south of the town. Guerra took this step partly because, as the autumn advanced, it would have become unpleasant to remain much longer on the yacht, but chiefly because the hospitality and friendship of the highest official in the provinces was of the greater political importance. It was true that Othello, giving the most circumstantial description of spectral midnight attacks on the yacht, whispered that Juan's ghost had driven the Leader away. Orestes was more sceptical,

declaring that the Signore had already forgotten Juan, and that, good though he was, one poor soul more or less meant as little to him as it had done to Bonaparte, who was not good. In this respect all great men were alike; they carried their consciences in a shirt of mail, so to speak. Besides, apart from that, was not Juan a murderer? Although he did not agree with him, Othello, in his heart of hearts, silently admired his colleague's profundity. After all, the case was by no means simple.

The *Capo* was overjoyed by the Governor's attitude and compromised him by sending him a letter of thanks. He also recommended his brother-in-law to exploit this moral victory without scruple. At the close of the year the situation was extremely tense. The various Governments, the parties, and even the revolution lay at the mercy of conflicting forces. It was essential to prevent Austria from intervening, before one cord or the other snapped, or before the lightning-flash appeared which was to kindle the European conflagration. Otherwise the lethargy of the Italian powers would lead to some peaceful settlement, to a fresh blowing away of the clouds, as had happened in the case of the Ferrara incident. The lightning was bound to flash in January. The *Capo's* hopes were centred in Livorno and Sicily. Guerra was to engineer a revolutionary demand for autonomy on the part of the Government, a nice little civil war in Tuscany. As he well knew, the Grand Duke had stiffened his back in responses to appeals from Vienna. His reforms were as cheap as the early figs which were now on the market. Guerra must demand a constitution, and egg on the Governor to the point of revolt.—Madda did not appear to be well; she was suffering from something resembling homesickness, which in her case meant a longing for action.

With a frown on his face, Guerra skipped the last lines of the letter which the *Capo* had sent by ordinary post. There was no need for him to egg on the eager and sympathetic Governor, whose pace was sufficiently alarming as it was. As in a personal letter to the Grand Duke a few days previously he had candidly discussed the necessity for a constitutional gov-

ernment on representative lines, it was not unlikely that the *Capo* was already influencing his fiery soul.—The *Capo*! Capturer of souls, harbinger and moulder of Fate, marvellous motor of an Age that could not yet be surveyed as a whole, important even in his superficialities, hateful and lovable!

Thinking over him, Guerra carefully read the lines about Madda. Did he intend to send her into politics again, or did he only want to bring her once more into touch with her brother? Prompted by the secret demoniacal impulses deep down in his mind, was he perhaps offering him this infernal elixir as the best possible stimulus to revolution? Or was he moved only by pity for her? Love? What manner of ravenous deity was it that devoured or destroyed the personal passions of men and filled them only with a passion for the Age?

Orestes entered the room.

“A man wishes to speak to you, Sor Gasto. He says he is an old acquaintance. I do not know him.—He calls himself Renzo Maddii.”

“Renzo!” cried Guerra. “I should think I do know him! He is my old colleague of 1830. The bravest fellow in Fiesole, Orestes! But he has taken long enough to report himself!”

The views of Orestes and Othello regarding seniority of acquaintance with the Signore did not bear inspection. They were both unjustifiably tempted to regard their first year of service under Guerra as the beginning of everything and to ignore anybody who belonged to an earlier period. But, as this division of time obviously had no justification, they displayed marked antipathy towards anyone they were compelled to recognize as senior to themselves. Madda had suffered from this in Paris, as had also the good-natured Scaleterra. Thus Guerra's eager impatience to see the new visitor only deepened their gloom. With a renitent expression Orestes left the room; but—was it possible?—the Signore was actually following him; nay, he had actually caught him up and had a strange light in his eyes. “The thin fellow in the drawing-room has apparently something more to recommend him than long years

of service as a colleague," muttered the thinker, Orestes, to himself; and he shut himself into the kitchen, determined by no tittle of information to spare the Sienese fool, Othello, any personal trouble in his angry inquiry into the existence of this fresh unknown acquaintance. Did the Signore's eyes often shine like that in Livorno?

Renzo, the printer, the slim youth with a silent passion for the Leader and his Cause, Renzo with the fine voice! He sang but seldom, only when Madda begged him to, on the little balcony which joined the two houses in Borgunto, when dusk fell like a dark cloud over the austere beauty of the Mugnone valley and climbed the mountains, or when he had to give the signal on the main road to Majano, in front of the park walls of Isola, so that Maria Corleone might know that the conspirators were either coming or going—Renzo, the grave and trustworthy messenger between the Leader, the Princess, and the Party. The man was bound up with Guerra's fate through his insensate passion for Madda, who had played heartlessly with him; through his arrest in the underground communication tunnel between the Ghetto and the Via della Nave on the day before the arrest of the two Guerras, and, above all (yes, of course! Guerra exclaimed rapturously to his soul as he went out), above all, through having witnessed his life with Maria Pia. Except for Madda he alone was aware of this love; he knew the girl; they had been neighbours as children; he would know. . . . But why, when he had been released after two years of imprisonment, had he not been heard of until this day?

Renzo Maddii, now a man in the forties, had changed very little, though his brow was loftier and more stubborn, his thin face more lined, and his grave glance even graver. A gust of joy, which seemed to rise shyly from the depths, suddenly made him blush hotly as he saw Guerra coming towards him with every sign of pleased surprise. Then all at once there was a change, a sort of barrier seemed to rise up, a feeling of resistance and of strange repression, which Guerra was quick

to detect in his sad eyes, his stiff bearing, his stammering speech. He had begged the authorities to allow him to remain in Florence after his release from the Bargello, and on signing an undertaking not to engage in any political activity in the future, he had received permission to stop in the city and had found work at a printing firm in the Via del Cocomero, where he was still employed.

"I don't understand," said Guerra, shaking his head, "I don't understand, Renzo. You are the last person I should have expected to leave the Party."

Maddii bowed his head.

"But I did not do so, Signor Guerra, at least not in my heart. And that is why I have come."

"A little late in the day, Renzo. Do you mean to tell me that in all these fifteen years you have been able to find no opportunity of getting into touch with me?"

"Certainly," replied Maddii frankly, "but — but one tries to lead an orderly, peaceful life," he added, speaking quite low, "and one has to consider one's wife and children."

"Oh, so you are married?" cried Guerra, absent-mindedly, wondering why Renzo was resisting him. "But you heard that I was in Florence?"

"I even saw you."

"And you did not come to me?"

Renzo gave a distressed shrug of his shoulders. "I had my reasons, Signor Guerra," he muttered.

"Your reasons?" exclaimed Guerra with a frown. "Have you not forgiven me because your political views led to your becoming acquainted with the Bargello?"

Renzo threw back his head.

"Oh no, Signor Guerra; but it would be better if you made no further attempt to find out my reasons."

Guerra began to feel uneasy. Leaning forward and whispering into Renzo's ear, as though they might be overheard or understood, he uttered the one word: "Madda?"

Renzo blushed vividly. In the anguish of the moment he

had not given a thought to the Leader's sister, though the torment she had caused him in the past was now vaguely stirred up in the depths of his heart, as a pool of water is sometimes mysteriously stirred from below. The sound of her name had unearthed these buried memories, and his eyes suddenly beheld Madda's image more clearly reflected in her brother's features than his own imagination had pictured it for years past. She had not been kind to him, shyly though he had concealed his love, and on the one occasion that she had kissed him, she had done so only in fear of her life. The pressure of her body had not been prompted by love, but had been a base and obvious means of sealing the lips of a man who knew too much and preventing him from denouncing her to the tribunal of the Party for her underhand action against her brother. Renzo was not the man to forget good or evil. He remembered to this day the words with which he had thrust her sweet body from him—"This is sheer fright, Madda; it is bad of you." And he saw her forced smile again, the cruel, slow, dazzling parting of her lips. He looked at the brother for a moment as vague feelings of hostility surged to his mind, expecting to see the same smile. But Guerra's expression remained grave, almost distressed.—"He is much better than she is," thought Renzo; "perhaps. . . ."

"That would have nothing to do with you, Signor Guerra," he replied gently.

Guerra suddenly lost patience. It struck him that his whole interest in this man had a different foundation. He felt the strange wall safeguarding the fellow from the questions that rose to his lips. He could not understand the reasons for his guarded behaviour, and his impatience increased.

"Well, anyhow, you are here now," he observed with unconscious sharpness, "and have succeeded in getting rid of the obstacle that has been holding you back these fifteen years. That's the main point. I don't want to know any more."

"Yes," replied Renzo, nodding anxiously, for he was probably at the end of his tether. "I found it difficult enough. I tried

to persuade myself that my reasons might possibly have been foolish from the beginning." And he made a sharp movement with his hand, as though he were tearing down a curtain. "You have probably forgotten all about it ages ago, Signor Guerra."

Guerra felt as though he had been struck a blow in the nape of the neck and suddenly informed of everything. His heart beat fast and his temples throbbed violently. For the moment the shock lasted he kept his head bowed and his eyes closed.

"Forgotten what?" And still panting and full of fear, he blurted out: "Forgotten whom? . . ."

Renzo gazed at him, guessed everything, and suddenly grew calm, alert, and eager. — "If he has already got as far as that," he thought, "I shall be able to tell what he is worth."

"Forgotten whom?" he repeated slowly. "Why, my wife, Signor Guerra — it is an old tale, easily forgotten perhaps — Maria Pia!"

"Oh!" gasped Guerra, spreading out his fingers and fumbling for a cigarette. Yes, Renzo continued, with a vague impulse to cruelty, it was difficult to look at life as a whole; many paths crossed each other so unexpectedly. He had known the child all his life and was aware, among other things, that she had never thought much of him. But when he had come out of prison and gone back to Fiesole for the first time, it happened that her mother had just died. It was true she had other reasons for being sad — forsaken souls are not fastidious and are easily attracted to one another. In such cases love quickly springs into being. Forsaken souls like to feel grateful — at least that was what had happened in this case. And Renzo raised his grey eyes and looked sharply at his companion. "Yes, Signor Guerra, love and two children make one cautious. To this day I have never told my wife who Guerra is. Even now she could not endure the knowledge."

He was silent and waited. Guerra had not yet lighted his cigarette, but was kneading it silently between his fingers.

"I was rather expecting a word or two from you, Signor Guerra," continued Renzo after a while, growing uneasy. "Was I right?"

"Yes, Renzo," replied Guerra sadly. "I—I have not forgotten her—I cannot."

Maddii stood motionless for a moment. Then he put out his hand to him.

"Well, I must be getting back, Signor Guerra. You understand?"

"Yes, yes," Guerra rejoined.

And Renzo left. Orestes closed the front door behind him and ventured to peep through the window into the room in which Guerra, with trembling fingers, was kneading a half-empty cigarette. Whereupon, returning to the kitchen, he startled the mystified Othello by the triumphant look in his face.

3

1848 had come like a thief in the night and was already there. Those directing the various political currents of the day who were not already hardened became so. Those who were by nature soft were tempered by the breath of that unscrupulous year. The cowards quickly stiffened in self-defence against the blows of those turbulent days. They grew miserly with time, which became more important and irrevocable with every passing hour. The Grand Duke received a telegram from Vienna: "No further!" They were words of advice as well as a menace and ultimatum all in one. He knew that only a few days' march away Field-marshal Auersperg was waiting with three times as many men as the whole of the Tuscan army could boast; in a trice he might be friend or foe.

When the Governor of Livorno submitted proposals for the granting of a constitution, the Grand Duke's first impulse had been to order him to send in his resignation. But Caminer had given him a timely warning.

"Be careful, your Highness! In Milan the people are knocking the cigars out of the officers' mouths, and the latter are hitting them on the head with their swords. At any moment now Field-marshal Auersperg may be more urgently needed in Lombardy than in Tuscany."

The Prince declared that this was all the better, since any intervention on the part of Austria, whether for or against, must be avoided for the time being. And for the present he would deal with Livorno single-handed.

"Very well, very well," Caminer replied. "But don't make the question of the constitution the subject of dispute. For it is one of the planks in the Liberal platform too, and many high Government officials are in favour of it, as I happen to know."

The Grand Duke looked up. He also knew — the blind man. Caminer smiled. "Governor Bottai has placed his summer villa, which is Government property, at Signor Guerra's disposal if he cares to live in it," he observed, pointing to a report he had just received.

When an official order was sent to the Governor of Livorno by the Ministry of the Interior, refusing to allow Guerra, the Opposition leader, to take up his quarters in Government property, or to have him forcibly ejected from such quarters, no information came to hand that the command had been obeyed, and when a second order was sent, summoning the Governor to appear in Florence in person, there was no reply. Whereupon Baron Caminer, Minister of the Interior and Commissioner of State, was sent as plenipotentiary to Livorno. He was astonished to find Guerra in the Governor's room, and the sight of the two stern and hostile faces before him made him fear for his personal safety, with the result that he was more severe and formal than he had intended to be. Though the Government was aware of the friendship between the two gentlemen, he said, going straight to the point, at the moment he wished to speak to the Governor alone.

"I am sorry," replied Bottai firmly, "but all authority is now in the hands of Signor Guerra!"

"That is interesting!" exclaimed Caminer, planting his legs firmly apart. Guerra briefly explained that a provisional National Directory had been formed, of which he was President, and Bottai, Scaleterra, and Menozzi members, and that they would know how to secure their independence of the Florentine Government until such time as a constitution had been granted, and a definite decision had been reached with regard to the National movement.

"A fine paraphrase for high treason!" observed Caminer.

"Revolution," interposed Bottai. The memory of the murderer Juan flashed through Guerra's mind, for he had used a similar argument, and his knees began to tremble.

"You must be aware," continued Caminer, "that your insurrection calls for the most drastic measures on the part of the Government."

"We are prepared for that," Bottai replied for Guerra.

"You must surely know, Marchese," continued Caminer, turning with great dignity to the Governor, "that as an official who has taken the oath of allegiance and been guilty of disloyalty, you will not be shot like a gentleman, as Signor Guerra will; you will be hanged like a felon." Bottai and Guerra raised their heads. They were both very pale.

"My object," replied the Marchese, trembling all over, "is an honourable one, and my conscience is clean. I am not fighting against the Grand Duke, but for Italy. This end sanctifies the means."

"But is your clean conscience and national honour ready to shoulder the responsibility of civil war?" demanded Caminer. Bottai could not think of an immediate reply.

"Yes, if the Sovereign sets a bad example," interposed Guerra.

Caminer, who had not yet taken a seat, slowly drew on his gloves. He knew now that the two men were not contemplating seizing his person and strengthening their position by

holding a man of his position as hostage. And he felt almost grateful to them.

"Is your resolve irrevocable, Signori," he asked in a friendlier tone, "or shall I give you a few days to think it over?"

Guerra burst out laughing. Bottai thanked him drily, and, with a formal bow, Caminer left the room.

But a few hours later, when Guerra arrived at Ardenza, the Minister's luxurious travelling-coach was standing before the Governor's villa. The two old soldiers, who remembered the Bargello only too well and were suddenly overcome by the recollection that they were deserters, must have jumped to the conclusion that Caminer intended calmly and boldly to seize Guerra and possibly his two retainers with him, and, white with fear, they were making signs of warning from the garden. But the Signore was in one of his ungrateful moods. Calling them idiots, he went into the house. It almost seemed as though the visit had not come as a surprise to him. Caminer was standing at the drawing-room window, and as Guerra entered, he turned round in a calm and friendly manner.

"So here too you have the sea, a fine house, peace, and a garden — just as you had when last I paid you a visit, not very far from here," he observed.

And he pointed across the blue-grey sea towards Elba. Whereupon, in response to a silent sign of invitation from Guerra, he took a seat.

"Guerra," he said, glancing at the red hair on his hands and then removing them quickly from the table, "lift up the visor of your helmet. That is why I have come to you unofficially. Who knows when we shall have another opportunity of talking to each other, without witnesses, without arms, and away from the publicity and intrigues of the political stage!"

Between the villa and the steep beach, whose stones cleft the breakers and scattered them, there was a weather-beaten clump of pines, which the wind from the sea had bent forward towards the land. From his seat Guerra gazed out at the bent trunks of the trees, which looked as though they were trying

to escape from their mighty neighbour, the sea, but, unable to do so, had assumed the posture of flight as they grew. They might have been symbols of some mythical punishment, so sorry a spectacle did they present.

"I don't think we have much to say to each other," he replied, taking no notice of what Caminer had said.

"Possibly, possibly," replied Caminer, nodding thoughtfully; "maybe our last opportunity was lost long ago." And he looked so piercingly at his companion that Guerra was forced to turn his eyes from the pines and meet his gaze. "You ought not to have taken Madda from me then, Guerra."

The winter afternoon had given way so quickly to night that the leaden sea merged into the sky and could no longer be distinguished. In this blending of sea and sky there was something at once paralysing and conciliatory which prevented Guerra from flaring up in anger. Moreover, the chronicle of the passions had just provided quite new examples. Why should he upbraid this man whose red skin seemed to hide far deeper romantic pangs than were felt by many a moonlight serenader?

He said nothing, but merely shook his head gently. Caminer still gazed at him.

"Guerra," he repeated, speaking even lower than before, "why did you not let me become what the Governor has just become? Surely you are not concerned with the quality of a man's opinions! Politically I have no opinions; I am utterly indifferent to the merits of your own or any other side. My policeman's hatred of the masses comes from my plebeian origin, as is always the case with renegades. But I should be equally strong as a Minister or a rebel, a good weapon in any hand. My one thought would have been for Madda Guerra. She was good to me—whether from ulterior motives or otherwise I care not a rap, for I have not been exactly spoilt in that way. And she was not exacting in the least."

Beneath his quivering red eyelashes the lines and wrinkles

seemed to stand out plainer than ever. Even this surly sun had passed its meridian.

"My sister is married," replied Guerra gravely. "But that is no news to you, Caminer!"

"I know," he agreed with a nod. "But I am not concerned with the present. The opportunity has gone by. After eighteen years the Grand Duke was for one unique and unforgettable moment kind to me. Now I belong to him. And that is of no mean significance."

"And if my sister were here, Caminer," cried Guerra hotly, "and were to go to bed with you, you would get up the next morning and forget all about the Grand Duke's moment of kindness and conquer Florence for me! I certainly am not concerned with opinions of that kind!"

Caminer rubbed his temples with the palms of his hands, as though they were aching. His eyelids were swollen.

"I also have to tell you this, Guerra. Even you did not notice that I was playing a part at the Governor's house. Your Directorate is far more useful to us than anything we could have instructed an *agent provocateur* to do. Now the Grand Duke has the most excellent excuse for marching on Livorno with the Liberals. And if I choose, he will fill the mouths of the Liberals with a fine fat constitution, and, with an Austrian brigade from Ferrara to help him, he will fling you, together with your Directorate and your band of Livornese brigands, into the sea within twenty-four hours. And then you will never know when Europe really begins her revolution."

As the night became darker, the leaden sea-air seemed to grow more stifling.

"If you choose, Caminer!" said Guerra softly. "And what if you do not choose?"

"Then possibly you will achieve your revolution. But —" He stopped and suddenly seized Guerra's hand. "You have come on the scene too early, my poor fellow. The old world takes longer to die, and it won't die just yet. Or it may simply feign death like a dor-beetle, which is thrown away only

to come to life again at the right time. But the man who acts the hero can do so only on the stage where he is paid to perform, and not on the bare boards of contemporary history, which draws its life from him. On none of the European stages, which have become so turbulent, will the protagonists in the dramas of 1848 be fired upon with blank cartridges—in the fifth act, of course. The stage-managers make more certain of their victims now, Guerra! Madda's husband is the best living example of Almighty God on the Lines of Communication. If you were to go to Paris, even at this late hour, and play the part of the Archangel, you would at least see the curtain fall, and know whether there was any applause and to whom it was vouchsafed."

He stopped speaking. Guerra did not stir. He may not even have been listening. But he did not take his hand away and Caminer's tone softened and became almost tender.

"You could not go back now, Guerra?—Of course not," he added, as Guerra's hand stirred angrily.

"Of course not," said Guerra in low calm tones. "But why do you degrade yourself to become my executioner?"

Caminer was silent, but did not release his hand. It was now so dark in the room that the two men could no longer see each other.

"The Grand Duke will not appeal to Austria yet, not at once, at all events," he muttered. "I shall postpone the march on Livorno for ten days; perhaps you will be able to find a way out. Perhaps the new year, which is big with events, will provide you with one. You see, I am trying to think of everything. . . . We need not remind each other of this conversation later on, Guerra. After all, we shall remain the two gladiators, fighting one against the other, in accordance with our destiny." And he laughed softly, because he had already thought of this simile once before. "An attraction for the arena, which the two gladiators hate much more than they hate each other. Why should they hate each other merely because they have to kill each other?"

Arena! thought Guerra, the good old bull of Arles, the bad butchers, the strange mob who insist on having the *corrida*, and St. Trophime, with its gentle saints, all mellow and eternally lifelike! And the little Arlésienne at the feet of the Queen of Sheba, between whom and himself the first spark of love had been kindled, only to be shut out by the door of eternity, which had no handle!

"I do not hate you, Caminer," he said, "and I shall not kill you."

"And what about the Grand Duke?" Caminer inquired, with strange cheerfulness. "Why don't you promise to make him King of Italy? That would clear the road! And, later on, you could either forget your promise or remember it, as occasion demanded."

"The Grand Duke is not the sort of man I should care to play fast and loose with," Guerra replied gravely. "I have too high an opinion of him."

Caminer squeezed his hand so hard that it hurt, and his voice sounded close in his ear.

"Yes, yes, yes, Guerra, don't play fast and loose with him — work seriously with him; that will mean salvation, for both of you."

Guerra wrenched his hand away.

"You ought not to have said that, Caminer," he said sadly. "You are a dangerous man. You confuse me with your puzzling suggestions, which, after all, are only your way of being diplomatic. And if I really felt like being grateful to you, I should always be afraid that you were expecting some kind of token of gratitude."

Caminer laughed; it sounded horrible; he knew it. He knew that if the room had been light, Guerra would not have allowed himself to be so friendly.

"I am bribing myself," he said with a low chuckle; "all this time I have been nursing the corrupt hope that I might see Madda again. — Ha, ha, ha! — Guerra. . . ."

To Guerra, who was deeply moved, his laugh sounded like

a pant from the depths, the anguished cry of a man who could not weep.

4

Every day was now important. The cog-wheel of the new year had set its sharp teeth into Europe. The Grand Duke had become a difficult master. On hearing the news of the strangely peaceful though definite revolt of Livorno, he had mobilized his army. His ministers and the Council of State, taken somewhat by surprise, had raised no objection, hoping against hope that this sign of determination would suffice to restore the authority of the Government. But the Grand Duke wanted to march out.—At a Cabinet meeting he was asked whether he would be content with an armed demonstration.—Certainly not! He intended to shoot. The blind man raised his calm face.

“Who will shoot, *Serenissimo?*” he inquired, his voice sounding a long way off. “And at whom?”

The Prince knew the significance of this question and looked at Caminer, who was impartially stroking his beard.

“You answer that, Baron,” he commanded sharply. “I need hardly say that I have no wish to discuss the Prime Minister’s obstructive remarks with him.”

Caminer looked calmly from the Prince to the blind man.

“The Grand-ducal forces will fire on the Livornese autonomists,” he replied with complete detachment.

The blind man’s eyebrows rose and fell above the closed lids.

“People’s views have changed, or rather broadened,” he rejoined, turning to the Prince. “The forces, like the town and province of Livorno, are Italian.” And, raising his hand, he pointed round the table. “Which of you, gentlemen, would care to shoulder the responsibility for a fratricidal war? For my part, that also amounts to the question of confidence.”

The ministers, including Caminer, were silent. The Grand

Duke glanced at him with a malicious smile and, without saying a word, left the council-chamber. That afternoon he summoned the Minister of the Interior to the library.

"I don't care a rap for any of you," he began with a bluntness which was entirely foreign to him and did not carry conviction, but seemed to denote a lack of self-confidence. Caminer, who was no fool, was quick to observe this. The Prince continued to gaze at him for a moment, as though he wished to enhance the tenseness of the situation, and handed him three telegrams, which he had drafted with his own hand — one to Vienna, another to Milan, and a third to Ferrara, asking for the support of Austrian troops equipped with light field-artillery. Caminer read them. He remained perfectly calm — outwardly at least — and replied that in this matter the Minister of War was the competent authority and not himself.

"Have done with that!" the Grand Duke retorted indignantly. "You disappointed me today at the very first opportunity. Apparently our alliance is worth no more than the strength of your character."

Caminer seemed to have conquered his moment of spiritual weakness, and stood there hard, ruddy, and self-reliant.

"All the less reason, if I may be allowed to say so, for your Highness to wish to shoulder me with the responsibility for such a fateful undertaking."

The Grand Duke tugged at his side-whiskers.

"But who was suggesting anything of the kind, my dear friend? I am doing this on my own responsibility, of course. For it is a question of my authority and possibly of my head. You are, of course, all at liberty to resign . . . that is to say, you still mean a good deal to me. I really don't know why!" He stopped, and waited for a faint sign of pleasure in his collocator; but Caminer remained cold. "It is the eleventh hour," continued the Prince, speaking quickly; "we must come to some decision. Bend or break — I say, break! The Austrians have no reason to feel sentimental. Livorno or Florence, it is all one to them! Do you understand?"

"Yes!"

"Will you remain with me?"

"Yes," replied Caminer apathetically. "But not so long ago you were of opinion that any kind of intervention on the part of Austria would be disastrous."

The Grand Duke drummed on the writing-table with his fingers. Not so long ago he was still inclined to believe in the possibility of a peaceful settlement. But now not only was a certain province in revolt, but, as he was only too well aware, the whole of the Ministry as well. That seemed to him to be a sufficient motive. It was a revelation! And it was for this reason that he intended to strike, at all events while his Austrian arm was still stronger than Guerra's, which he felt certain was not more inclined for peace than his own.

"Guerra," replied Caminer slowly, "is the only one of the Nationalist leaders who has any intention of offering you the Crown of Italy. If you allow an Austrian sword to cut him down prematurely, the realm will become a federated republic."

The Duke was silent, and his fingers stopped moving. He had himself well in hand; the practice of a lifetime had made him a model of self-control. The wild beating of his heart could not be heard by his Minister. Incidentally, why should it be beating so hard? — And he moistened his dry lips.

"For some time," he observed at last, calmly, "I have had the feeling that you were inclined to be partial where Guerra was concerned. Perhaps you are not aware of it yourself."

"I can remember the time," replied Caminer, as though the Prince's words had made no impression on him, "when I suspected your Highness of similar feelings. But to be inspired with respect for a great personality, who for many reasons may influence one's life, is not the same thing as taking sides. A contemporary, even if he is an opponent, is almost bound to allow such a character to develop himself."

"This new Franciscan humility of yours does not suit you, Caminer," observed the Prince, with a somewhat forced smile.

"A republic!" he added, in sharp nervous tones. "You are fighting for your *protégé* with dangerous symbols. You suggest terrible thoughts. Guerra, for instance, might consider his own chances of becoming President as much more important than mine of receiving the tricoloured Crown."

The laugh that now rudely shook the red beard and moustache, revealing the teeth between, sent the Prince's thoughts far back into the distant past. The room alone was the same. Then old del Monte had stood at the window and had been dumbfounded, like the Grand Duke himself, by the rebellious savagery of that grin, which was as irreverent and significant as the Age itself, then only a menace on the horizon, but now close at hand. On that occasion the grin had been a sort of rebuke for a lie the Prince had uttered—he could not remember the subject of it. But today it was a long, loud laugh, which dragged forth a hidden truth from its hiding-place. The Grand Duke bowed his head, ashamed and helpless. He wondered whether the man who was laughing would also dare to speak—to speak out. . . .

"You may rest assured, Sire," replied Caminer, "that the Presidency of the United States of Italy is a matter of much less moment to Signor Guerra than is the Crown of the Kingdom of Italy to you!"

The ruddy fellow had said "Sire," and yet the Prince remained bent over the writing-table and did not spring to his feet and punch him in his hairy jaws.

"You have wounded me, Caminer," he said in low tones, gazing at his trembling fingers. "For I feel I am worthy; yes, I feel I am worthy. . . ."

He said no more, but turned aside in horror. The ruddy man had sprung forward and, seizing the right hand of the humiliated monarch, was pressing it to the prickly hairs about his lips.

"Yes, yes!" he exclaimed excitedly, speaking fast as he bent over the hand, "you are worthy, and it will mean salvation for both of you."

The Grand Duke drew his hand roughly away.

"And you have been a fool," he cried, "perhaps for the first time in your life! Do you imagine I can still hesitate after such an insult as that? You have broken the neck of that great personality. Yes indeed! To that extent am I petty and lacking in a sense of duty towards a great contemporary! — What would you have me do?"

Caminer had drawn himself up, his brow livid with exertion or rage, and seized the telegrams.

"I will send them off!" he said hoarsely.

"No!" exclaimed the Prince, laying his hand on the papers. "I do not trust you. I shall send them myself." —

But he did not do so. All through the long afternoon, which quickly yielded to dusk, he remained motionless. Sitting at the writing-table, he held his hands over the telegrams, as though someone were still standing by to snatch them from him, and pondered. Once again the footman stood at the door with the candlestick, waiting long and anxiously, exasperated by the endless silence, which hindered him in the performance of his simple duties. Thirty years of absolutely regular service and now this ridiculous uncertainty! He did not even know whether his august master was or was not still in the library, whether he did or did not mind being disturbed, or whether he would fail to notice the sacrilege of lighting up too late — it must be pitch dark in there! — or no longer needed a light. The old man knocked, but there was no reply. So, balancing the political account after his own fashion, he came to the conclusion that the *Serenissimo* must be going into a decline, and that many impossible things might happen. Accordingly he did not knock a second time, but stepped in. The Prince was at the writing-table, with his hands folded over the papers, looking strangely cramped and motionless, with his head sunk low between his spare shoulders. He noticed neither the entrance of the servant, nor the light he had brought in. But an hour later he rang the bell, summoned his *chasseur*, and gave him a note for Princess Corleone.

The Grand Duke was utterly forlorn; ever since Guerra's turbulent petitioners had presented themselves, four months previously, he had not seen anything of Maria Corleone. His children, including the pale and apathetic heir apparent, were strangers to him. His daughters were married, and the Crown Prince preferred to live abroad. If ever he chanced to come to Florence, his father was less aware of his presence in the city than he was of the official visit of any of the lords in waiting, whom he so seldom summoned.

Maria Corleone, as the Prince was already aware on that memorable evening, would find it impossible to return to the old relationship on the following day or for many weeks to come. She had suffered shame and indignity at his hands, just as he had suffered through her. Both of them had opened up old wounds. The name of the man who had stood between them, ever since they had known each other, still retained its painful sting. They could neither of them, even out of pity for the other, pretend to have forgotten it, and though they were probably moved by a deeper feeling of compassion than ever, they could not express it or put it into words. He had sent her a basket of flowers for the New Year. She had thanked him, but had not attended the Court festivities on that day. He had not really expected her to do so, and even doubted whether she would come in response to his note. In his guarded way he had implied that her visit was not without importance — that was all.

She came at the usual hour, soon after his lonely dinner. The old footman announced her with an expression of respectful good cheer, as though he were trying, in his own fashion, to announce the termination of the painful period of absence and by a decorous sign of pleasure — within due limits, of course — to convey the profound significance of her return. But the Prince remained grave and once again sank in the estimation of his old retainer, who by a barely perceptible change in his demeanour contrived to banish the lines of cheerfulness from his face and adopt a rigid servility of pose, as, in a low voice, he

announced: "Her Majesty!" In so doing he clung to an old tradition, which, in spite of occasional rebukes from the Grand Duke and the Princess herself, prompted him to usher her in by a title proving that he recognized the claims of the late Pretender to a hypothetical crown.

Either the soft light flattered her, or else this was one of her good days. As she sat in the austere Venetian chair, outlined against its noble background of brown and gold, she bore a disquieting likeness to herself in the thirties. Her dark dress made the lines of her mature figure appear slimmer, the wonderful line of her face from brow to chin was the same as ever—this was so, even in the daylight—and the light fell flatteringly upon her. Her hair was still black and plentiful; kindly shadows concealed the lines on her brow and about her mouth and neck and even the flabby fullness of her cheeks, and restored to her eyes, which were still beautiful, the provocative glamour of long lashes. In her thirties her eyes, which had been slightly almond-shaped, had had a golden gleam in the iris, a golden glow with yellow lights, and her eyelashes had been so long that her eyes always looked painted. They were lascivious eyes. The Grand Duke gazed at her, and the blood ran hot in his veins. For the first time for many years he saw once more the picture of her surrender and felt a mad longing to possess her again. She became uneasy, for he said nothing.

"You are in great trouble; but how can I help you?" she asked.

Trouble! He pulled himself round to the writing-table, to keep his mad desire in check. Or was this outburst of his ageing body, inured to abstinence, due to more significant causes than the sensuous images which had apparently inspired it? Stirred to the depths, he let himself drop into his chair at the writing-table and in a moment of self-deception tried to arouse her pity and draw her to him.

"I am so terribly alone, Maria!" he groaned.

She sprang immediately to her feet and, bending over him,

stroked his hair. He did not look up, suddenly afraid to see her at such close quarters. He wanted to retain the fair image of a moment ago in his mind, and let his eyes rest on her plump, well-kept hand, which now lay on his.

"Please read these!" he exclaimed, pushing the telegrams into her hand.

When she had read them, he looked up. Her cheeks were flushed, making her look extraordinarily young, and the yellow lights gleamed again in her eyes. A quiver passed from her nostrils to her mouth—he knew it of old.

"Is this why you asked me to come?" she inquired in low malicious tones.

"Yes, because all this is aimed against Guerra," he replied; and, raising his hands, he drew her head to his lips.

"My God . . ." she murmured, taken aback by his kiss. He felt the emotion in her words, and suddenly, in the faint breath that followed them, his fate was decided. For lo! she returned his kiss, almost passionately, and with her embrace drove what she said into his heart: "Don't send these telegrams!"

He pursed his lips. Her soft mouth was still caressing his features, when she grasped what was happening, and, drawing herself up, she shrugged her shoulders like a girl and returned to her seat. He remained where he was, with his back turned to her.

"That is not precisely what I wished to say to you or hear from you, Maria," he observed calmly, after a while. "There is something else besides. Caminer tells me that Guerra is considering me as a possible candidate for the Crown of United Italy. I should ask you what you thought about this if I knew you would tell the truth.—I mean, provided you are not merely concerned about rescuing Guerra from the Austrians."

"If you really mean all that seriously," came the reply from behind his back, "and are prepared to come to a decision in accordance with it, then you have lost your old sense of what is proper and becoming."

"Yes," he replied, nodding and smiling enigmatically. "That has happened to both of us during the last few moments."

He knew, although he could not see her, that she was blushing, and he waited awhile before he turned his head. He was still smiling.

"Now," he continued gently, "I shall hardly be able to ask you to spend the night with me — without taking the telegrams into account —"

"I will stay," she replied with a somewhat forced nod. The Grand Duke rang for the secretary on night duty and gave him the telegrams, saying they were urgent Cabinet telegrams, to be enciphered and dispatched at once. Their dispatch, as also any replies that might come, were to be kept secret, even from the Government Palace. Then he turned to her once more. She was sitting quite still on her majestic chair. Her eyes alone moved, for she was forcing herself to look him in the face, and her gaze constantly strayed towards some dark corner.

"Dino," she exclaimed, calling him by a pet name used so long ago that at first he did not understand. "Dino, I am frightened!"

"Yes, yes," he said, with a nod, and looking unusually old, "I can well understand. It is almost like a sin. . . ."

"Yes," she murmured, "it is wicked of you for your own end to pretend that I, old as I am, can be the young woman I once was."

"Oh," he exclaimed, putting a hand to his brow, "I was not thinking of you at all, I was thinking of the telegrams."

"Guerra will not meet his end in your clumsy trap," she observed after a while. "I can't believe it. You too in due course will make a mistake in your political calculations."

"Possibly," he replied wearily. "And I suppose Guerra too would not wrong you, if he were in my place now?"

"Why should he?" she rejoined, and stood up. "He did not desire me even when I was still desirable — and now you don't care that I am going."

"I do care very much," he replied, with unutterable sadness,

"even if it is only out of curiosity to see what fate would answer to such a little bit of consistency."

"Forgive me," she pleaded, and remained with him. —

The revolution broke out in Palermo on the 12th of January, and on the following day came the news that the rebels had won a victory in Sicily. In the evening the reply of the Strong Man of Vienna reached Florence. He declined to help. Critical events and their possible consequences allowed for the time being of no splitting up of the military forces. The Grand Duke calmly showed the telegrams to Caminer, Minister of the Interior, who read them in silence, but did not laugh, as the Prince had expected. Would Caminer, for obvious reasons, be so good as to conceal this exchange of telegrams from his colleagues in the Ministry? The ruddy man bowed his acquiescence.

5

It was about this time that Guerra received one of the *Capo's* extraordinary letters. "There is something uncanny about the people of our Age. I am almost tempted to believe that mankind is never completely adapted to an Age, or that the obstacles in their path form a mystic continuation of Adam's punishment, a sort of constant state of being driven from paradise, out of which the catastrophes of the nations eternally spring. We have now launched the idea 'Constitution' into the world, and it is by no means impossible that its political realization in the near future may turn the tables upon us and leave us fettered hand and foot. The unhappy spiritual state of most of the men of our day (ourselves perhaps included, Guerra) makes them such bad advocates of the enlightened thought of the Age that they are only too ready to support a political State with which they pretend to be satisfied. Let me tell you quite frankly that if in a few weeks' time our pompous French poet friend succeeds in conjuring his humane Republic into being, he will, for this century at least, save all the

remaining monarchies of Europe and stand sponsor to an Italian Kingdom. (Meanwhile I don't give his Republic ten years of life.) For every European monarchy and petty principality has learnt all manner of lessons both from him, from us, and from the much more backward majority, and will contrive to escape from its difficulties with the word 'Constitution,' which by the time it is granted will have become utterly dishonest and unclean. It is a terrible pity, Guerra! For our glorious year 1848 is as hostile to kings as was 1789, but it is more intellectual—that is to say, more humane, which means less effective (according to my theory, which you know). Thus I have confessed to you that I am a Republican, but as my heart is a den of cut-throats, and I do not like admitting anything of the futility of which I am almost convinced, nobody need know anything about this, and you can forget it. So I am now bombarding Italy with heavy-calibred 'Constitution' shells, and you can do the same in your Grand Duchy. The first ruler to grant his country a constitution (no matter how tattered and torn royalty may be therein) will probably be King of Italy, except, of course, the Bourbon of the blood royal of Naples. This, Guerra, together with the infamous 'perhaps' accompanying it, is one of the vilest baits in the history of the world, and we ought really to swallow it and in common decency die, before throwing it out to mankind. But I, for my part, have managed to deal with it, and with my weak powers and inferior instruments from the noble eminence of '48 have succeeded in hewing so much out of it that at least it will provide the basis for a United Italy. Michelangelo alone could have had this '48 idea of building a monument out of a mountain. But half-way between Buonarroti and myself Fate placed you, Guerra, with your reckless *condottiere* soul, that steers a futile course between contemplative demagogy and human decency. (Forgive me, my dear fellow, I hope I have not hurt your feelings!) And, as regards the Tuscan bait, I still feel angry with myself for having once encouraged you to feel a certain sympathy for the Grand Duke, or for having felt obliged to warn

you against such a method of reinsurance. All this may have confused you or made you unduly reticent.—Good luck to you, Guerra; if Tuscany is not granted a constitution within a month, strike! The Austrians will not come for a while, and we have at least made such progress that no Italian will fire at you—although by this I do not mean to imply that every Italian is your friend.—Madda is suffering, and, damn it, through you, Guerra! (Destroy this letter.)”—

The letter provided food for reflection. Guerra tore it up slowly, and as he did so, the malicious word “reinsurance” rang louder in his ears than any other of the suspicious statements it contained, whether openly expressed or merely implied. Did this twisted repetition of an old warning amount to a fresh warning? He remembered his last conversation with Caminer. Was the Grand Duke himself possibly using him as a pawn in the game, with this end in view? Or was Maria Corleone, who had once contemplated a similar manœuvre in connexion with her decrepit old Pretender, influencing the Prince in this way? For he still refrained from attacking Livorno! Had he himself reached his eight and fortieth year only to be appealed to by both friend and foe as an agent for future crowns? Were worth and worthlessness for every Age so close together as to resemble the two sides of a medal? Heavens, was it possible to be the plaything of all and sundry all one’s life—heads or tails!—even of the married man Renzo Maddii? He sent for Scaleterra and put the question to him.

“Do you believe that the Grand Duke, who is also an Archduke of Austria, can seriously be thinking of presenting himself as a candidate for the Crown of United Italy?”

“Certainly,” Scaleterra replied without hesitation. Guerra observed that it did not appear to him quite so obvious, unless the Prince had undergone an extraordinary change. His cheer for himself in September did not lend colour to the supposition. He had always passed as a man with a proud and unblemished soul.—Scaleterra shrugged his shoulders. Why

should not a man so admirably qualified be King? After all, what did the individual matter?

"But does not a king matter?" Guerra interposed. "Don't you think the individual matters as a king? A Florentine Republican pleading for a king from the House of Habsburg!"

"Gasto," Scaletterra replied, slightly embarrassed, "I was only pleading for what you are pleading for yourself!"

"For what I . . ." stammered Guerra, and his brow flushed. "Are you mad? . . ." But he suddenly stopped short.

"You should not allow it to disturb your political calm," said Scaletterra quietly. "It would be quite irrational to exclude the Grand Duke from the candidature simply because his fate was or is in some obscure way interwoven with your own. Besides, matters are far from being as advanced as all that."

"The *Capo* urges us to support his candidature as a bait for obtaining a constitution," explained Guerra. "The man who first. . . . You understand? But I refuse to do it in the case of Tuscany. I respect the Prince too much to cheat him, and I don't mind saying so. As for being a king-maker, with all due respect for the opinion of many people, I am not the right man!"

"Well, what do you want to do now, Guerra?"

"Nothing," replied Guerra, "nothing for thirty whole days. Up to the present the Grand Duke has left the Livorno Directorate in peace. What his reasons are remains to be seen. I am courteous and shall give him a month to draw his own conclusions from events unmolested. The constitution is only the insignificant touchstone and a fairly obvious one. But it will be followed by a more significant one."

"And that is?"

"War!"

Guerra wrote to the *Capo* frankly informing him of this decision, and the latter, with a smile on his face, went to Madda with the letter.

"Magnificent!" he cried with a laugh. "Your brother is

magnificent, Madda. When I want to get something out of him, which it is not easy to express — for Guerra has become a devilishly sensitive latter-day saint — I simply send him an order to the contrary. Now our Imperial and Royal Grand Duke will, I hope, miss both the Austrian and the Italian connexion, and possibly the wider human one as well." And he pursed his lips. "Do you imagine that Maria Corleone is still in love with Guerra?"

"Of course!" she replied.

"His poor Imperial and Royal Highness!" exclaimed the *Capo* thoughtfully, and lifted his piercing eyes to her face. "But, after all, you are a courageous woman, Madda, why don't you go to Livorno without Guerra's permission?"

"I am no longer courageous," she replied sadly.

6

In the ungracious granting of constitutions the King of Naples, an autocrat of no mean intelligence, led the way. On the 29th of January he changed his Ministry, turned the bloodhounds out, put a few Liberals in, and promulgated the plan for a constitution after the French pattern. In return for which the people of Naples kissed his stirrup and his horse's head as he rode through the Via Toledo. The provisional Government of Sicily, however, rejected the constitution as being inadequate. Nevertheless, the wave of mock constitutionalism travelled irresistibly northward. The travesty of history, which allowed the most rabid absolutist to unfurl the banner of 1848, created perplexity only for a very short period, and then only in a very few brains. Italian governments which favoured reform had, under the gifted leadership of the blind Minister of Florence, resolved to proceed to their changes as far as possible simultaneously, so as to avoid anything in the nature of an undignified race and forestall the Radical cheers and acclamations. But now anything approaching calm and measured construction was destroyed.

For the first time Caminer saw the colour of blood in the Prime Minister's parchment features.

"The instigator of it all in Naples," observed the blind man almost loudly, his eyebrows twitching nervously, "is already starting a reaction!" And he pressed his palm to his brow, as if to shield his blind eyes from the sun. "The idea is defiled before it sees the light. Now you will see!"

On the 5th of February the *Re Tentenna*, who liked to speak French, said: "*Je ne veux point entendre parler de constitution*"; on the 7th of February he received the municipal deputations and sternly and emphatically declared that any decision he might reach would be entirely independent and in no way forced upon him by the masses. Yet in his pocket he had a dispatch from the Governor of Genoa to the effect that he must either grant a constitution or be prepared to face a state of siege, while his heart was filled with jealousy of Naples. On February the 8th he granted, "as the most solemn pledge of his complete confidence in his people, and as a consummation of the reforms already passed," the fundamental statute, consisting of the outlines of a constitution. Then followed a Feast of Brotherhood, a day of National Thanksgiving, a public Mass in front of Gran Madre di Dio, the fine church on the bridge across the Po, and a festive procession of thirty thousand people.

It was on the 1st of February, when the nature of the proceedings in Naples was fully known, that the blind Prime Minister of Tuscany made the angry remarks about the instigator in Naples to Caminer in the antechamber of the Palazzo Pitti. Whereupon, bidding his secretary lead him to the Grand Duke, he laid a voluminous memorandum before him.

"What is this?" the Prince inquired.

"The fundamental statute of the Tuscan Constitution."

"Oh," cried the Prince, staring at the blind man, who returned his glance with so shrewd and self-confident an inclination of the head that the Grand Duke lowered his eyes. "And who drew it up, your Excellency?"

"I did with the help of three experts from the Government departments of Law, National Economics, and Government Reform."

"You, Marchese!" the Prince rejoined slowly; "then that is all the more reason why I should read it with the greatest attention. And may I ask who commissioned you to draw it up?"

The blind man raised his eyebrows, but, as no other muscle moved, it gave his face an expression of unearthly pride.

"Why, the Age," he replied gently, "my conscience, my sense of duty, my love of my people — there are a hundred answers to your question, your Highness, and if none of them pleases you, then I for my part will be satisfied with a very different kind of answer — my resignation."

"That is out of the question," the Prince retorted in distress, "and I am sorry to find you so ready to hurl your ultimatums at me. But surely you will allow me to ask you this further question — whether without the comedy in Naples you would still have brought up the question of the constitution today."

"Certainly not," the blind man declared unhesitatingly, "and that comedy in Naples is such a blasphemous travesty of the great idea that you would do well, your Highness, to pay as little heed to it as possible." And he raised his chin. "It is in your interests, you understand, not to allow the Tuscan idea to be a farce. There are people enough here with good eyes and sharp ears. The tarantellas would easily be recognized, and not many bars would be allowed to be played."

"Marchese," observed the Prince in sharp low tones, "that sounds almost like exerting pressure — and, as you can well understand, it would only make my perusal of the document more difficult."

"You are mistaken, your Highness," replied the Minister, contradicting him in his far-away manner. "I meant it as a request that you should tackle the problem as though it had

been presented to you without any pressure whatever having been brought to bear, or any bad example having been set."

"You may set your mind at rest about that," returned the Grand Duke. "I might even have the courage not to understand."

The blind man tried to say something in reply, but the words remained inarticulate, playing for a brief second about his fine sensitive monkish lips, like a smile of wisdom. Whereupon, turning his face aside, he stood up as though he did not wish to notice the sudden flush that had suffused the features of the prince. The latter, who was naturally courteous, also sprang to his feet and, as the blind man was groping his way, gently led him to the door and into the antechamber, where his secretary hurried eagerly forward. Caminer was there too, waiting for him to appear. The Grand Duke remained standing at the door of his library, gazing at the puny back of the blind man, who, leaning a little to the right, was supporting himself on the arm of his guide. It was a sorry spectacle, and the Prince stood gazing at the door in the passage long after the couple had passed through it. Caminer waited patiently.

"Please!" exclaimed the Grand Duke after a while in calm low tones, and returned to the library. Caminer followed him.

"I take it that you of course were aware that the Prime Minister, without instructions from me, was framing a constitution. Is that not so, Caminer?"

"Certainly, your Highness," the Bargello replied in friendly tones.

"And why, except for a few vague hints, did you not tell me anything about it? — Damn it all!" he cried, his patience suddenly exhausted, "don't laugh like that, even if the question does strike you as stupid!"

Caminer had not laughed, nor had he any desire to do so. But he accepted the rebuke as though it had been deserved.

"A perfectly justifiable question," he replied humbly. "But why should I trouble you before it was necessary, your High-

ness? Exercises in constitution-making as a private pastime on the part of the Marchese have never been contrary to law. Besides, I know of no man better qualified to draw up a constitution. I take it, your Highness, that you agree it had to be drawn up, in order that you might either accept or reject it. If we had buried our heads in the sand and allowed the time to slip by, Guerra himself would before long have been the author, in which case it would have been a decree."

The Prince listened calmly and paused before replying.

"Guerra," he observed at last, "is very clever; for he is very calm. He is in fact alarmingly clever, for even after three weeks of the most effective propaganda he has remained disquietingly still. And tell me frankly, Caminer, is not the blind man's constitution also a decree? Suppose, for instance, I were to reject it. . . ."

Caminer made a courteous gesture of protest.

"It is all-important to keep up appearances, to make a show at least of sovereign acceptance or rejection. Suppose, as will probably be the case, that Piedmont and the Pope also grant constitutions, what would be the earthly use of your remaining isolated, your Highness? For Austria is at present too far away. . . ."

The Grand Duke brushed the grey hair back from his brow again and again with exasperated insistence, and with his other hand covered his eyes.

"I feel like howling aloud," he groaned, "but I am already sunk in mud to the lips. . . ."

Caminer rubbed his chin in embarrassment and shook his head compassionately.

"The Age," he observed pensively, "certainly takes but little account of princely dignity. The autocrat of Naples performs the democratic gesture with ease, because it is a sham; but to the humanist of Florence it will be difficult for a similar reason." And, raising his red eyes, he turned them towards the Prince. "Nevertheless, it is surely strange, your Highness, that it should be the only conclusion that morality allows — for is it

not true, *Serenissimo*, that the idea of resignation occupies our minds much less than its extreme opposite, which is certainly obvious, though less obvious than the granting of the constitution that is being foisted upon us? I refer to your candidature for the Throne. I hope you will forgive my candour, your Highness."

The Grand Duke slowly raised his head and gazed steadily into the man's red eyes.

"I must forgive you, Caminer," he said gently. "Unfortunately, you mean well by me in this matter. I felt better before I had handed over my soul into your keeping. But that does not mean that you are a devil or that I am another Faust; for I am not even a Schlemihl, if I may be allowed to use another German simile.— Well, then, after all this terrible preamble, what is your advice?"

Caminer at once became business-like.

"Guerra is making his moves extremely cleverly. He apparently knows you and applies no pressure, even when he could do so. He leaves you the semblance of liberty. Very well, your Highness, you must be cleverer than he is and checkmate him with his own tactics. Nobody is forcing you to grant a constitution or to change your Ministry. But grant the constitution and change your Cabinet. In the place of the Minister of the Interior, install— yes, your Highness, install Guerra. What are you laughing at, your Highness? In Naples the Party leader, Bozelli, an unknown lawyer, has actually been made Prime Minister. Here the able lawyer Guerra would pacify the country, terminate the fatal autonomy of Livorno, clear up the general situation along national lines, avoid a revolution, and place you at the head of the candidates for the Throne— many birds with one stone, *Serenissimo*, and Austria far away!"

The Grand Duke laughed and held his head.

"It does one good to laugh," he groaned. "Less than a month ago I telegraphed to Vienna, and now I am expected to telegraph to Guerra. . . . Listen, my dear friend, can I still pre-

tend that we are innocent? Of course, you will answer, of course — after all, I am compelled. . . . Oh, God! ”

Caminer nodded somewhat absent-mindedly. He did not like the Prince's laughter, and from time to time a sort of weariness crept from his temples into his eyes like a ghostly shadow. The Grand Duke had stood up and gone over to the window. The garden looked green, although it was winter. With the sun shining brightly on the yew hedge and the conifers, and the fountains and statues, the early February day gave the impression of summer. A gardener was plucking violets. He was not compelling anyone, muttered Caminer to himself, quite unexpectedly, but . . . He said no more, leaving the rest to be divined. The Grand Duke shrugged his shoulders. — It was a poor specimen of a back, thought the sturdy Caminer, and it reminded him of the dried-up Englishwomen who copied pictures in the Uffizi.

The Grand Duke turned slowly round, as if he were yielding to faint pressure against his shoulders.

“Let me get into touch with Guerra; but don't promise him anything on my behalf.”

Two days later Caminer announced that Guerra had refused to see the Grand Duke, maintaining that nothing had yet occurred to warrant a meeting between the Radical Leader and the Sovereign. — “Can such reserve really be part of the political game?” Caminer asked himself in astonishment. The Prince did not seem surprised, however, and repressed a bitter smile.

“It is perfectly true that nothing has yet happened,” he said. “As for you, my dear Caminer, you are the richer by a further piece of discretion. The correspondence with this gentleman must be placed in the same secret drawer as the Vienna telegrams. Historians will turn up their noses if they should ever get hold of them.”

But Caminer was not attending. He was unceremoniously stroking his beard, endeavouring to put a complicated thought into suitable language.

"I don't think I am mistaken, your Highness," he observed at last, "in saying that Guerra — hum! as a private individual — feels, so to speak, ill at ease with regard to you. He may have qualms in connexion with reminiscences of a personal nature." And he twisted his pointed beard in embarrassment. The Grand Duke knew that the speaker had the moral of his observations still on his tongue, and therefore stared fixedly out of the window. Caminer cleared his throat. If the Prince only possessed the necessary resilience, it would be wise to exploit Guerra's obstructiveness; if not, then it would be advisable to persuade Princess Corleone to leave the town for a time.

The Grand Duke did not move.

"Think yourself lucky that I was not listening to you, Caminer," he observed after a while.

That day, at a Cabinet meeting, he announced that he had read through the draft of a constitution and had found it satisfactory, but that he refused to be hurried in making a decision. He had to consider the attitude of his allies. "Even if Austria were included among his Highness's allies," replied the Prime Minister, "they would probably not be grateful to him for his consideration, and it was a pity that Tuscany, the most advanced of the Italian States, should allow, not only Naples, but also Piedmont to take the lead."

On the 9th of February Turin was granted a constitution. The town was in an uproar, the students cheering *Tentenna* uninterruptedly and booing Austria; whereupon the Tuscan Ministry threatened to resign if the Prince did not grant a constitution within a week, while a telegram from Vienna warned him against making any concessions and reported a state of siege in Lombardy and Venetia. Caminer, whose name figured among the signatories of the Government ultimatum, presented himself at the Pitti Palace in a somewhat excited frame of mind and pleaded with the Grand Duke, who crouched above the political whirlpool as though he were turned to stone.

"Give your promise! Promise all they ask! No part could be easier to learn! If I may be allowed to say so, *Serenissimo*, your threadbare nobility has already lost you the Crown of Italy, unless Guerra intervenes! Offer him the task of forming a cabinet; inform the blind man officially that you will do anything he asks, and send a ciphered telegram to Vienna to say that you are praying for the victory of the Imperial and Royal Cause. . . ."

"For the moment, I find you rather tiresome, my dear friend," the Prince interrupted. Caminer looked up startled.

"I could arrange to make the promises in your name, your Highness," he murmured, "and later on, for all I care, pretend that I was the deceiver."

The Prince looked up at him and shook his head.

"Do I deserve such devotion, you strange creature? Why don't you wait a bit—perhaps there will be no necessity for you to give proof of it."

At his request Maria Corleone arrived during the afternoon. Ever since she had heard that Vienna had declined to accede to the Grand Duke's request for help, her southern fatalism had traced the finger of destiny behind all that had happened. She would have been but little disturbed by the tempestuous days through which they were passing and would have watched the march of events with equanimity had she not been filled with pity for the Prince. His calmness that afternoon astonished her, and she was taken aback when he coolly informed her that he had tried to arrange an interview with Guerra, but that the latter had declined, because the political situation did not yet warrant such a meeting. And he made a gesture of resignation.

"Perhaps he will consent to see me when I have granted a constitution," he added.

Maria Corleone looked into his worn features, and felt as though she bore a crushing weight upon her shoulders.

"Since when have you attached so much importance to him?" she asked.

He pressed a finger to his gaunt cheek.

"You are surely aware," he replied wearily, "that the old dignified bearing is a thing of the past! But I refuse to abdicate, and am therefore compelled to hoist the sail of falsehood if I wish to reach the shore." And he locked his fingers in anguish, making the joints crack. "I wish, Maria, you were able to gather enough from my words to spare me the necessity of saying too much. . . ."

"My God!" she murmured, deeply moved. "Then give them their constitution."

"Constitution!" he exclaimed, with a low laugh. "Of course I shall give them a constitution, though the others have done that too and are now in full sail. But I want to be the first to reach the other bank; even if I cannot remain any longer where I now stand, on this side. . . . Yes, yes! Everyone has a devil of his own inside him!"

And, stretching out his hands, he clasped her arms. She let them hang as if they had suddenly grown limp.

"Well?" she asked in distressed tones. His fingers glided to her hands and raised them to his lips. But he did not kiss them; he merely muttered his words over them, speaking rapidly, as though he were delirious.

"And shall I tell you what I really think, Maria? — I am the only sovereign who is worthy, yes, who is worthy of the Crown! Guerra will be in the Government! I shall offer him dictatorial powers during the period of transition if he. . . ."

"If he makes you King!" she said, growing calmer. "I understand! You were already thinking of this a month ago, when you were more jealous of your dignity."

He threw his head back a little and looked into her face.

"Men like me," he said, hardly moving his lips, "men who refuse to withdraw, can be crumpled up by danger like a glove, so that only the form remains. My dignity is now crumpled up—and if you were ten years younger, I should prefer to be more closely connected with a *souteneur* than with my immediate past."

Her lips parted a little and she uttered a barely audible cry, like the first note of a laugh. His mouth moved loosely before he spoke again.

"You know, don't you, what I have in view for you? And why I don't even say—now prove your love—me or him. . . ." And he gave a low laugh. "Don't you find me amusing in my new rôle?"

She nodded.

7

Unlike Othello, Orestes was not susceptible to women's charms, and when a certain distinguished lady did not descend from her carriage, but sent a footman to parley with the old one-eyed retainer, and, instead of giving a name, described herself vaguely as "an old acquaintance," she unsuspectingly touched Orestes on his tender spot. He sullenly took his time to announce her arrival to the Signore, who had certainly been busy enough during the last few weeks, and at the moment was engaged in a serious and animated discussion with Bottai and Scaleterra. Maria Corleone waited patiently in the carriage. A certain physical shyness arising from the exaggerated importance which she quite unreasonably attached to the change in her appearance made her terrified of meeting Guerra again. She dreaded his first glance, which would tell him how much she had aged, and force a cruel comparison with the past upon his mind and her own. So preoccupied was she with her own thoughts that she did not notice the apparent rudeness of his delay in coming to her and did not even turn to look at the grey sea, which, with its white-crested waves, was roaring behind the bent pines.

Scaleterra and Bottai were no longer able to acquiesce in Guerra's reserved and cautious attitude. They regarded his refusal to meet the Grand Duke as a tactical error, a flat refusal to accept the Prince's capitulation. Scaleterra, whose knowledge of what lay in the background was deeper than Bottai's, did

not hesitate to say that Guerra's fatal conscientiousness was just as much the result of his personal attitude towards the Grand Duke as of that alleged partiality for him and desire to protect him, against which the *Capo* and perhaps even he himself had ill-advisedly believed themselves called upon to warn him.

"What you are doing now, Gasto, is the outcome of precisely the same sort of constraint, except that the circumstances are reversed."

"I know what I am about," Guerra maintained stubbornly. "I want much more than this wretched constitution. I also know why I do not wish to meet the Prince yet. I shall not raise a finger until the fifteenth! God! Scaleterra, every day that passes works in our favour!"

And, stepping up to the window, he caught sight of the strange carriage and a lady's gloved hand in the opening of the door. His heart leapt with such fierce joy that he staggered and was obliged to steady himself against the window-ledge, and Scaleterra asked him in alarm whether he was feeling ill. Guerra burst out laughing and hurried out of the room. Orestes, who heard him running downstairs, stood waiting for him on the last stair, and his conscience suddenly pricked him. He tried to explain matters and announce the visitor, but Guerra had already rushed past him and was out of the house. Orestes looked after him, shook his head, and returned to the kitchen, utterly indifferent to all the Signore's old acquaintances.

Maria Corleone recognized his step. But the eagerness his haste indicated came as such an exquisite surprise, and lent such magic or tragedy to their meeting, that, so little had she expected it, she was forced to lean back and close her eyes. All her courage had ebbed away, and she distinctly felt the wild beating of her heart between her head and the leather back of the carriage. Suddenly both her heart and the world were stilled, and, opening her eyes, she saw Guerra's head and body leaning motionless into the carriage. But in his face, which did

not seem to her to have changed at all, she saw a look of such bitter disappointment that, with the clear intuition of a woman, she at once understood — he was not disappointed because she had grown old, but because she was not the woman he had expected to see. Every woman is a mass of depths and riddles, while in many the soul is so powerfully — not to say disgracefully — subservient to the body as to present a complete enigma to men; and in almost every aging woman the longing for the past of their own bodies is so intense that it surpasses anything of the kind on earth. Her understanding of the situation provided Maria Corleone with that modicum of comfort and assurance which her body needed in its tragedy. — “He did not run to the carriage with such superb eagerness because he thought it was I,” she reflected; “how could I have been so foolish as to imagine such a thing? But he recognized me without the terribly critical scrutiny of the male.” — She was even able to smile.

“So it is you?” said Guerra gently. “’Pon my soul, I was not expecting this!”

“So I observed,” she replied. “I ought to have spared you the misapprehension and given my name to your servant. But one is occasionally so — so remiss.”

Guerra, who had handed her down from the carriage, let her speak. Her voice was still as tenuous and mysterious as she herself had once been. When they reached the house, she entered a little way ahead of him, and Guerra, somewhat dazed, surveyed her massive proportions. Was his splendid infatuation, which had just made a fool of him again behind his mental image of Maria Pia, blurring his vision and his thoughts? For suddenly the woman before him had also come between him and the memory of the girl. Her massive frame had effected a strange disguise of herself as she used to be. Her voice, which a moment ago seemed to have remained unchanged, and her profile, which was still beautiful, made life’s pleasantry seem all the more capricious. There was no actual extinction of Maria Corleone as she had once been, but

merely a blurring and distortion of her beautiful form, wrapped about, as it were, in a heavy cloak. To him, at that moment, she might have been her own mother, an august stranger. At the foot of the stairs she turned round and, revealing her somewhat heavy face, with its double chin, came to a standstill. Perhaps she wanted him to go first, so as to show her the way, or she was anxious to prevent him from taking further stock of her. She said nothing, but merely tried to give a polite formal smile.

He conducted her to the large drawing-room on the first floor, a huge, lofty uninhabitable apartment, with an uncarpeted floor of red and black tiles, and full of stiff gilt furniture, while the bright walls were covered with portraits of men with epaulets and decorations. He liked this room so little that he had never used it before. But his two friends were still sitting in his study, which was almost the only room he frequented; moreover, for some obscure reason, he did not want to conduct the Princess into comfortable surroundings.

They sat down on two straight-backed arm-chairs, with a round mahogany ormolu table between them. She cast a swift glance at his grey locks and bowed her head. Then, with a matronly movement of the lower part of her face, she put her head forward, and he noticed the flabby flesh right and left.

"How long is it . . . ?" Guerra began softly, more out of politeness than from any other motive. Whereupon, strange to relate, Maria Corleone looked up with an almost maternal air of reproach and gave a well-nigh imperceptible shake of her head. In this moment of acute clear-sightedness his swift piercing glance, which left her eyes and wandered right and left over her face, outlining it like a bad drawing, had revealed the whole truth to her, even if, on that cruel transit from the carriage to the front door, her eyes, like antennæ in the back of her head, had not told her enough. Her foolish but hitherto invincible illusion capitulated under this last glance and before Nature's injustice in having made even the grey locks of this

man lend him additional attraction. As she looked up, Guerra was astonished to see that her hard little aristocratic nose dominated the full oval of her face and returned to it something of its old expression of haughtiness.

"Pray do not strain yourself, Signor Guerra. I have not come on my own account. I was asked to come by the Sovereign."

The most painful feature of the whole proceeding was that this man, who was responsible for the course her life had run, spoke not a word of personal interest and made no attempt to show a human concern about the intervening years, but seemed entirely satisfied with her explanation. Nay, the look of scrutiny he gave her seemed suspicious and even hostile to her. The conversation that followed was business-like, cold, and formal, as befitted an important political conference. The main question as to whether the granting of a constitution would be sufficient to induce him to join the Cabinet, he rejected with calm determination. The constitution would in any case be granted as an inevitable sequel to what had happened in Turin, and that very afternoon, in order to prevent any further delay, he had given the Florentine Government until the middle of the month to reach a decision. How could the Prince suppose that for the sake of an object already to all intents and purposes achieved, he would forgo the advantages of being in Opposition in order to shoulder a share in the responsibility for the Grand-ducal equivocalities? — He gave a smile of mingled courtesy and irony as he pronounced these stern words. The offer of a Minister's portfolio seemed neither to surprise him nor to make any particular impression upon him. Maria Corleone, whom he treated merely as an emissary of the Grand Duke, and concerned with no other interests than his, now asked on what conditions he would accept a post in the Ministry. Replying with a significant assurance which proved that his program had been decided to the smallest detail, he laid down his terms—formal withdrawal of the Grand Duke from the Imperial House of Austria, the return of his papers to the Austrian Ambassador, a general call to

arms and mobilization of the regular and volunteer forces. She was staggered, for she was aware that the Prince had not yet reckoned with war as a possibility. She did not lose her presence of mind, however.

"Are you in a position to provide the Grand Duke with a definite dynastic equivalent, Guerra?" she asked courageously.

"Is the Grand Duke concerned about such an equivalent, Princess?" he replied with a smile. "Or is it actually the motive for his suspicious change?"

"Suspicious?" she protested. "Surely the word is unjustifiable as applied to him! Besides, how can I tell what is in his mind in that connexion? My question was promoted purely by the personal interest I take in him."

Guerra gave a low laugh.

"Maria," he said, "why did he send you and not Caminer, who has already been here once? Caminer is a better diplomat than you are, my dear."

Maria Corleone was confused by his attractive laugh, which reminded her even more cruelly than his words of the man of beloved memories. She felt herself growing weaker.

"I wanted to bring you together," she replied in tones of distress, "but I am sorry I came."

"I am sorry too," he returned gravely, almost unkindly, "because it has not been altogether pleasant for you. And you have had no better success than Caminer would have had. But as I would not have you return without an answer, let me tell you that if Tuscany has not been granted a constitution by the fifteenth, the Prince will lose his Grand Duchy. So you can inform him that he would be well advised to secure this equivalent for himself while there is yet time."

She nodded obediently. Probably she had ceased to listen to him and, gazing spellbound at his handsome features, had forgotten even her own existence.

"Gasto . . ." she said tenderly. But he did not allow her to proceed. Her wretched plight tortured him and caused him profound uneasiness.

"I am no longer corruptible," he broke in with stubborn coldness. "Why do you imitate my evil practices of yore?"

She blushed. Her hands groped timidly across the table and stopped close to his.

"What do you want, then?" she asked gently. "I cannot bribe you any longer."

He was suddenly overcome by pity. The fact that at this moment she was able to address him so intimately, served as a reminder of the justifiable claims she had once had upon him. He stroked her hands.

"Yes you can, you can," he murmured, lying from kindness of heart. "Why do you belittle yourself?"

By this time her senses were confused; she believed him, and with eyes that were bewildered and moist with joy, she tried to give convincing proof of her gratitude. Raising her hands — once, twice — at last she stroked his brow and hair tenderly.

"Yes, Gasto, the Grand Duke has lost his old sense of dignity."

He gazed at her in astonishment; this was not what he wanted. The situation did not please him and he shook his head.

"That is not like you, Maria."

Whereupon she began to cry in a hopeless heart-rending fashion, her heavy body shaking the table between them.

* * * * *

On the day following Maria Corleone's return, there appeared in the official Gazette, a *motuproprio* from the Grand Duke, stating his intention of granting his people a constitution whereby the liberties and safe-guards "for which the hour was ripe, which his predecessors had already contemplated, and towards which all his own reforms had been directed," would be secured. On the 17th of February he received the thanks of the city; there was much shouting and waving of banners, and

a march past of thousands of people, which lasted two hours. In full-dress uniform he stood on the terrace of the Palazzo Pitti, raising and dropping his hand like an animated puppet. The pealing of the bells clanged through his aching head for hours afterwards.

THE MARCH OUTBREAK

I

THE year fired its mines, and Europe's difficulties began. In Paris on the 23rd and 24th of February there were demonstrations in front of the Madeleine and on the Place de la Concorde, the time-honoured field for agitation, where crowds of workmen, who were not even openly anti-monarchical, clamoured for reforms. In front of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs the troops were ill-advisedly ordered to fire on the mob — this meant revolution. During the night, barricades were erected throughout the city, and the insurgents stormed the Tuileries and the Palais Bourbon. Some of the troops, and, above all, the Garde Nationale, went over to the rebels, who, contrary to the expectations of even the most sanguine among them, were everywhere victorious. The King's throne was dragged from the Tuileries to the Place de la Bastille and burned. The King himself abdicated and fled to England, prophesying the irrevocable doom of monarchism in France.

Hitherto the *Capo* had had no practical experience of insurrection. Though from a distance he was kindling revolution in his own country, he found the proximity of the roaring, shouting, raging, destructive, and indignant mob most unpleasant and nerve-rending. He had expected the outbreak and had contemplated spending the time it lasted peacefully in some green and pleasant suburb of London. But the British authorities had raised difficulties about admitting him into the country, and just as he was on the point of deciding in favour of Brittany, the revolution broke out a few days earlier than was expected. Madda, who was familiar with such disturbances, and felt strangely exhilarated by the rebellious tension in

the air, was tactless enough to smile at the little man, whose face twitched at every sound which penetrated the closed windows from the crowded streets. But he paid little attention to her contempt.

"Heroism is your brother's business," he said. "I cannot abide the sound of shooting."

But it was not such an easy matter to escape from the great French Poet and political brother-in-arms, who now stepped upon the stage, and whose lust for display made him wish to be the cynosure of all eyes. It was also impossible for the *Capo* not to make some show of professional interest, and he allowed himself to be persuaded to attend the memorable sitting of the Chamber of Deputies in the Palais Bourbon, which culminated in the formation of a Provisional Government, and the proclamation of the Republic. When without further ado he asked for a guarantee of personal safety, the Poet undertook to answer for it.

It was an impressive, thrilling, and instructive scene, and the slight risk attending his journey through side streets, past gutted houses, and bodies lying covered near the pavement, proved well worth while. The pendulum of opinion, which swayed pedantically from side to side in that hall, favouring first one and then another form of government, proved so stimulating that he forgot his fears. The most unexpected thrill of all occurred when even the Great Poet himself contemplated the possibility of saving the monarchy — prompted purely by his nobility of heart and the obligation he felt under, as a gentleman, not to disappoint the mother of the little Comte de Paris, whom the King, on his abdication, had nominated as his successor. With his mother and brother the young Prince had fled from the Tuileries before the mob and taken refuge in the Chamber of Deputies. But it was only the impulse of a moment.

"Orders this way for the Peers of France!" cried the *Capo*, who had been awaiting an opportunity to vent his excitement.

But the Opposition laughter was cut short by fresh noises

from the street. The *Capo* turned pale and held his peace, rudely awakened to the fact that the mob was outside, and had been besieging the Palais Bourbon since the early hours. Shortly afterwards he was forced to endure the extremes of terror when a nightmare he had once had of being attacked by ruffians materialized in the most ludicrous fashion. For the unkempt mob burst roaring into the Chamber, wildly brandishing their deadly weapons. The Great Poet showed admirable courage. The *Capo* could see his fine head ever the centre of the throng, whether in consultation with the leaders of the troops that poured in, or surrounded by the Radical, Liberal, or Royalist deputies. Throughout he was received with respect and attentively heard. The *Capo* envied the physical triumph of his body, which reminded him of Guerra, who had the same power. And he grew sad. What a mole's existence! What a mole's body! What a mole's soul! And if the man up there and Guerra were, or had been, inordinately vain, such vanity admirably became their broad shoulders, their narrow hips and proudly lifted heads, soaring six feet above the ground. Surely there was little enough reason for despising inches in the human form!—And the *Capo* fell a prey to a fit of mad self-contempt, to which he was occasionally subject.

Then suddenly the invading mob began to retire. They soon returned, however, and this time, probably on instructions received from the Hôtel de Ville, which had already fallen into the hands of the Radicals, they remained where they were.

The *Capo* now had a strange experience. He had gradually retired to the back row of the Radical benches, to avoid being mistaken for one of the reactionary deputies, who, in face of this fresh invasion, were vacating the field in company with the moderates. Ever greater crowds surged into the hall, helping to increase the noise and disorder. The constitution of the Provisional Government was already being debated. The *Capo* sat, a small nervous figure in his corner, desperately wondering how he could get home. The Poet, swallowed up in the raging sea of people and making his way with great difficulty to the

rostrum once again, would have little time to attend to him; that was obvious. Turning his head anxiously round, he scanned the features of the people rushing about all round him, and of the rebels who had installed themselves at his side. He was obliged to acknowledge that few of them pleased him. Their big-mouthed ugly faces, which had horrified him from the beginning, belonged to the brutal members of the assault detachment — wild fellows, ready for a counter-attack, gorgon-headed shields against the great and daring ideal. But presently he observed a number of young men, whose fanaticism shone with a spiritual light out of the fire and faith of their eyes. He actually saw eyes instead of mouths. He saw the generations which he and Guerra had reared for the Cause in Italy — young men capable of prodigies of energy, who were destined to see what he and Guerra would never behold, although it would be the harvest of their sowing. A slim fair-haired man had taken a seat beside him. He had just left the platform and was undoubtedly playing some part in the movement. His companion, who followed close on his heels, addressed him by the strange name of Hetzel. The *Capo*, who listened attentively, came to the conclusion that he must be the shrewd publisher who was producing a collected edition of all the best poets and artists of the Age. When he had made certain on this point, he was delighted, and the friendly and interested expression on his face elicited a kindly smile of thanks from Hetzel, who was busy with pencil and paper.

"The list, comrade," he said laconically, bowing his head over the desk; "help me with it. Think of the best men we have. We must get on. We have too many chatterboxes and climbers, chief among them, of course — him!"

And he wrote the Great Poet's name on the paper and glanced challengingly at the *Capo*. The latter understood and his temples throbbed with joy. Had there ever been a greater moment in history? Was a brave and upright man really writing the names of the noblest supporters of the Cause of Freedom on a clean sheet of paper, and forming a Government

for his stricken country without bargaining and backbiting? Could he allow this opportunity to slip of putting to shame his lifelong scepticism and misanthropy?

"Louis Blanc, of course!" he suggested enthusiastically.

Hetzel nodded and scribbled down the name.

"Louis Blanc, certainly. — And Arago."

"Carnot."

"Dupont de l'Eure."

"Marast."

"Crémieux, who is speaking now."

"Ledru-Rollin."

"Marie."

Two or three more names were added, whereupon Hetzel sprang to his feet, and as he moved forward, he snatched a musket from the hands of a coarse-looking fellow, whose ugly mouth muttered an astonished curse. Pronouncing a few masterful words, he stuck his list on the fixed bayonet of the musket and, raising it aloft, bore it, a rude travesty of the murderous weapon, through the hall.

"The list!" he shouted, and his followers took up the cry. Crémieux, who was speaking, saw the bayonet bearing the list rise up before him, and interrupting his speech, he took the list, read it, nodded, and then read it aloud, amid ringing cheers of approval. The hour and the assembly began to move. "Lead us!" cried the mob, pointing to the Great Poet. The *Capo* joined in the cry. The Poet immediately started out for the Hôtel de Ville. Making his way, calm and effortless as a ship, through the crowd and the crisis, he arrived in time to hear Louis Blanc's great speech to the people on the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville.

"The Provisional Government wants a republic!"

"What a strange people!" thought the *Capo*, as he made his way home. The journey was no longer perilous. The storm was over, and the barricades melted away beneath the new sun of enthusiasm like dirty mounds of snow. — "What an ancient and logical people!" he thought. "For even if all this

does not last, this will surely be the finest and most memorable day of the whole year. And what about us in the south, our scattered, fragmentary young States? What a pity Guerra did not see what happened today!"

The following day brought fresh disturbances, but it also witnessed the Great Poet's greatest scene. The Communist wing of the Socialists was anxious to stamp its own impress upon the Provisional Government while it was still young and pliable, so that it might slowly harden into a Committee of Public Safety. It therefore held a demonstration with red flags in front of the Hôtel de Ville. The Poet, who was fully aware of the value of his person as a pawn in the game, pressed his way through the crowd and climbed on to a chair at the foot of the flight of steps, the blood-red banners all around securing him the happiest environment of his Parliamentary life, the most successful juxtaposition of his literary intelligence with the symbol-loving excitement of the masses. He did not speak for or against a political program, but for and against flags — against the blood-red flag which only surrounded the Champ de Mars in '91 and '93, stained with the blood of the people, with your blood, citizens! — and in favour of the tricolour, which bore the glory of France on the breeze all round the world. His speech produced an effect unequalled since the days of the great orators of the National Convention and diverted the history of the country and possibly of Europe also from the idols of Germinal and Thermidor, who were again left in the shade. The Poet's popularity rose to a height even greater than his most sanguine political ambition had led him to expect.

That day the *Capo* had remained at home, because he had work to do. He quite rightly surmised that events in Paris culminating, as they had done, in a Republic, would for the time being do nothing towards promoting the National cause in Italy. For the Princes were obviously united by common interests, and the *Re Tentenna* would at first find the new republican neighbour less acceptable than the Imperial and Hereditary

Foe, particularly as the latter had established an infernal military Government in Lombardy and Venetia. The *Capo* therefore instructed his Italian subordinates to exploit the events of February the 24th in Paris to the utmost for purposes of propaganda, but at the same time also urged them to await the effect of the French developments on central Europe. He wrote an exhaustive letter to Guerra, confessing how deeply he had been moved by the hours witnessing the birth-throes of the Republic and begging him not to allow himself to be misled by this admission. ("We have not got as far as that yet!") He warned him to be on his guard, to watch the effect of the Paris events upon the fire-brands of Livorno, and to strain every nerve to keep them within bounds. Possibly Vienna itself would give the signal when the reins might be slackened.— And as for Madda—Here he laid his pen down, weary and distressed.

Presently he looked up, acknowledging in his heart that he felt anxious. Madda had not yet returned! True, there had been no further sound of shooting in the streets that day, but in the suburbs matters were still unsettled and dangerous. Madda had been carried away by the events as by an intoxicating draught. She was an unaccountable woman. Possibly his indifference on the previous evening, when he had not found her at home, had been a terrible mistake! For she had been out of the house since midday of that day and had left without asking him many questions. That was of no consequence; but it would have been ridiculous on her part to run away in this clandestine fashion merely in order to join her brother, as if he, her husband, would have placed any obstacles in her way!—And he flew into a rage to deaden his fears. Yet he made no attempt to go to her room and find out whether or not she had taken her clothes and trunks with her.

She came back at about nine o'clock on the following morning, when he was on the point of appealing to the Poet and the authorities for help. She was in a highly excited condition,

and her face, which was changed, was feverish and drunk with debauch — a naked face, shamelessly unabashed. The *Capo* gazed at her. Agonizingly aware of the extent of her depravity, and unable with his tactless scrutiny to make her look up at him, he grew angry and aggressive in his own provoking fashion. Careful not to say a word about the anxiety he had felt, he behaved as if nothing could have been more natural than her prolonged absence. She, on the other hand, was extraordinarily loquacious and described the magnificent part played by the Great Poet in front of the Hôtel de Ville. How wonderful he had been both that day and the day before! What a man!

"Another Guerra!" exclaimed the *Capo*. "And I presume you naturally tried to make his sleep the sweeter after celebrating his triumph. I take it you noticed the lascivious glances with which he honoured you when he saw you here."

And he plied her with the confessional whip. She wriggled irritably and bared her teeth; her eyes were veiled and her voice subdued.

"I couldn't get at him, but was entangled with a fair devil of a man with a dreadful name."

"Hetzel," he said coldly. "The fellow's name is Hetzel. He is the Poet's publisher."

Madda looked away from him, and her eyes had a mad expression.

"Possibly," she replied with flaccid lips. "It's all the same to me."

The *Capo* began to feel he ought to pity her, but he could not. His face was red with rage, though his voice still remained calm.

"Yes, my dear, you are nothing but a Party prostitute — a loathsome creature!"

"Well, I'll do away with myself," she screamed. "Make an end of it! I'm done for!"

And she searched madly for a pistol. "Possibly, in her present state, she has forgotten that I possess no arms," thought the

Capo. And another kindred thought flashed through his mind — she would never be able to kill herself.

She had stopped shouting, her arms were hanging loosely down, and she looked desperately at him with piteous eyes. She said nothing and her silence touched him. He took her to bed.

Presently he finished his letter to Guerra. "And as for Madda — this dash, my dear brother-in-law (examine it carefully), is much thinner and smaller than the most wretched blade of straw that ever a drowning man tried to cling to. My dislike of arms of any kind, particularly fire-arms (there is not even a Carbonaro dagger of sacred memory in my apartments), has, in the interval represented by that dash, proved most valuable. When Madda has recovered, or is at least fit to travel, I will confront you with a plain question, unless, of course, you answer it in advance, dear, humane Gasto."

2

The three weeks which it took the Paris storm to spread over central Europe proved a long and difficult period for Guerra. The flash of Republican lightning caused a greater conflagration in Livorno than anywhere else in Italy. The Radical proletariat could not understand that it would be madness to make a free State of Tuscany, in the hope that at some vague future date, it might develop into the National State. The inactivity of the last few weeks had provoked them and incensed them against the Leader. In the Directorate itself, thanks to Guerra, Bottai, and Scaleterra, political wisdom still prevailed. But Father Menozzi, whose popularity increased every day, had developed into a dangerous advocate of the Radical wing, which suddenly declared itself Republican. In vain did Guerra point out to him the absurdity and danger of such an attitude at that juncture — Livorno single-handed could not possibly determine the future polity of United Italy. — Menozzi insisted on a demonstration, or at all events

a procession to Florence, with the object of providing the mob with some distraction. Guerra refused, replying that the fact that no other baubles were to hand was no reason for playing with fire. Menozzi threatened to conduct an expedition to Florence without his permission. Whereupon Guerra immediately mobilized the garrison and the Civic Guard and blocked the road leading out of the town with a battery of light field-artillery. As usual this proof of determination had its effect on the crowd and brought it to order.

"Are you aware, Gasto," Scaleterra observed anxiously, "that you are making headlong for the frequently disastrous fate which overtakes popular leaders?"

"Because I can no longer shake off the mob? But I will shake them off when the volunteer bands are formed."

Scaleterra shook his head.

"I am afraid that will not save you," he said. "I am afraid it is not only the Radicals you will shake off. You don't seem to understand, Guerra, how quickly a man is forsaken, particularly if he suffers a public reverse. These things must be taken into account."

Guerra still had the *Capo's* letter in his pocket. They were difficult times.

"I already know what it is to be forsaken," he replied. "And when that happens, it is possible not only to go on living, but also working."

"Let us hope so," his friend replied, anxious not to depress him overmuch. "But the people we are dealing with here are haters by profession, and what they can least endure is neutrality.—The murderer Juan and those guns right and left of the road to Pisa, Gasto, are the very steps which must lead to the hostility I have in mind. In Danton's case, if you will forgive the comparison, the steps were less obvious."

"Well?"

"You have too completely forgotten your powers of fascination, Guerra. You must make yourself loved again."

Guerra was endowed with the capacity to listen to advice

when it was well meant and to accept it. Moreover, he was influenced by the uncertainty of the political situation, and by private anxieties; he felt he must find an opening for his pent-up feelings, and some compensation for the extreme tension from which he was suffering. The magnificent rôle played by the grandiloquent Poet in Paris flashed through his mind. Perhaps for himself this was the last opportunity for the grand opera of yore, with arias and stage tricks of all kinds. He accordingly convoked a meeting on the Piazza of Livorno. The square was black with people. As he sprang on to the table which served as a platform, the applause was not very enthusiastic, though no one dared to hiss. As he stood like a target before the crowd, it suddenly occurred to him that an attempt might be made upon his life. But the thousand chances that from the thousands of gaps between the heads and shoulders of the mob a bullet might reach his heart did not rob him of his eloquence. On the contrary it provoked him to a brilliant apologia, due possibly to that premonitory activity of the overwrought senses which people call second sight, or to a feeling of anger stimulating virtuosity in speech. He seemed to be inveighing against his potential murderer; and, aiming at disarming his assassins with the first ten sentences of his speech, he opened with such a shameless effort at effect that Scaleterra, who was in the front row, did not dare to raise his eyes from the lining of the hat he held in his hands, for fear of catching the eye of Bottai, who was standing next to him. Guerra told his audience the story of his political martyrdom, as if it were the legend of a living saint. After his first ten sentences the whole crowd in the square were hanging on his lips like children listening to a fairy-tale. Throughout his speech, which lasted half an hour, he spoke only about himself, with voice, expression, and gesture touching all the strings of seduction, like a courtesan at a harp, and ending with the thunder of the final challenge:

“Who will dare to repay my fidelity with infidelity?”

“The murderers will be so intoxicated now by my eloquence

that they will bawl out about me and my life-history louder than anybody," he thought. For a moment the mob remained respectfully silent. Then a sudden hurricane of cheers wafted his table away from beneath his feet, raised him shoulder-high, and carried him soaring above the mouths that were yelling his name. He was very grave now and looked steadily in front of him. — "The uproar would have been much the same," he thought, "though my legs would have been higher than my head, and there would have been a few more shoulders under my riddled back, if, dear murderer . . ."

"Were you pleased with my solo?" he asked his friend later on, with a malicious laugh, "although the gunners remained at their posts!"

Scaleterra, who was still very much excited, gazed in terrified silence at him, and though he seldom thought of Madda, he could not help doing so now.

That night Guerra wrote to the *Capo* and Maria Corleone about his sister.

During the preceding three weeks, when Karlsruhe, Stuttgart, and Frankfurt had been convulsed by the storm blowing over to the east and north-east, the Grand Duke's mind had turned once again to the possibility of a League of Princes, the object of which would be to fight the Republican epidemic, change the whole aspect of the political problem, and support the monarchical principle at the cost of the national. Private messages from *Tentenna*, King Ferdinand, the Pope, and even the Emperor fortified him in the strange and desperate hope that he might still be able to turn back and regain the bank he had left. Like the majority of his fellow Princes, including those of Germany, he believed that the Paris spring tide would fail to rise above the numerous dams built by the conservative States of Germany and would hardly get as far as Vienna or even Berlin. His energy revived, and he set secretly to work on a scheme for an Italian League of Princes, which, as a reward, so to speak, for their anti-democratic attitude, would in due course receive from a friendly Austria permission to

unify Italy without having recourse to war or revolution. And indeed, if the tangled web of contemporary history were carefully examined, it was possible here and there to discern an opening for the mechanism of law and order. Then how could the suspicious and exceedingly threadbare legitimacy of the July Monarchy in Paris be regarded as setting so significant an example as to make the three days of the February revolution appear either awful or terrible? Louis Philippe was no touchstone of monarchism. — But what about the thorn in his own flesh? This was the substance of a sceptical reply he had received from a neighbouring Prince who was no more than a puppet of Austria, but whose utterances, precisely on that account, assumed a certain significance. “Dear Cousin, you are planning a League of Princes, although the rebel Guerra in Livorno has placed you in a more perilous position than any of us. Guerra and his infernal brother-in-law (who lives in Paris, dear Cousin!) are Jacobins of the breed of Robespierre. First apply your mind to the thorn in your own flesh and then turn to the question of the League of Princes, dear Cousin, if you wish to avert blood-poisoning and desire to help us. Pull out the thorn! At present the sky is overcast, and the days dark — the best light for a little surgical operation of the kind. Heaven knows you need not do it yourself, dear Cousin! There are plenty of obscure and shady surgeons in our Age who would perform the operation well and cheaply.” — This was a letter full of jagged hooks from which he could not disentangle his mind, and he was tortured with anxiety. His ministers, with the blind man at their head, grew ever more hostile and opposed to him, and apparently derived most satisfaction from a perusal of the lists of volunteers, now no longer secret, with the sinister and foolish idea of a national war in their minds. Caminer? A devoted and important official, probably the one solid beam in the whole of the fatal structure; but God only knew what his future value would be. And, in any case, he already knew too much and had witnessed too many desperate and unsuccessful private offensives on the

part of the Sovereign. It would be unwise to put himself entirely at the mercy of this man. Moreover, did not his own conscience present a stubborn barrier? He did not approve of underhand methods of violence in politics. The removal of Guerra, with whom his fate was so inextricably bound up, and whom — just imagine! — he had twice had to thank for the fact that he still had a life to fight for, struck him as mean, an act which his remaining years would be too feeble to bear. And what if Guerra had accepted the portfolio that had been offered to him? In that case would the Grand Duke have been left with the shameful task of deciding whether Florence offered any advantage over Livorno for the firing of the fatal shot?

The Prince was beside himself with anxiety; important days were slipping by, and rumours were coming from Hungary and Bohemia which bore a sinister resemblance to the reports from Milan and Venice, the upshot of which was — can monarchism be destroyed?

Then came another letter from the neighbouring Prince. "The avalanche in its beginning is no more than a snowball. It may start rolling north of the Alps, but in Livorno it is easily stamped flat, dear Cousin." — Again the Grand Duke made no reply. The scrutiny in the eyes of the two people who knew him best, Maria Corleone and Caminer, was painful to him. On her return from Livorno, Maria Corleone had ceased to be comprehensible to him. And he had no time for attempting to understand her. This naturally made him suspicious and he avoided her. She offered to maintain communications between him and Guerra if he wished her to do so. He categorically refused.

"I am afraid you are wavering unhappily between two extremes," she said, gazing at him. "I am afraid some day you will stand in greater need of him than he will of you."

"I am afraid," he rejoined rudely, "that you are still crazy about him, while as yet I am not. Things can pan out quite differently from what you imagine."

"Don't make yourself miserable," she said gently.

"And what am I now?" he cried in anguish.

"For Heaven's sake, keep calm until we can see things clearly," was Caminer's advice to him. "Let me implore you to be on your guard against your fits of determination! Surely you have some experience of them now!"

"Do I strike you as being such a fire-brand?" he ventured to inquire.

"Yes," replied Caminer, opening his red eyes wide. The Grand Duke was no longer able to hint at his dark meaning with the smallest word, though in his wildly active brain it was impossible to check the energy of an idea once conceived and allowed free play. He turned matters over in his mind. Had there not been for years an unofficial head of the Criminal Investigation Department, a certain priest who had been employed on all kinds of secret police work and had frequently been praised by Caminer? He had no difficulty in obtaining his name from the Secretary's office. It was Canon Don Lionello Vacca. As this man was known all over the city, he was not summoned to the palace, but to the Boboli Gardens, whence he was conducted to the library by a *chasseur*. The fat priest, who loved the stormy and turbulent Age in which he lived, and at the moment was engaged on intelligence work connected with Livorno, as well as on the less interesting task of spying on the Prime Minister and Princess Corleone, was agreeably surprised by the sudden interest shown in him by the Sovereign, and immediately resolved to prevent Caminer, who had apparently been kept in the dark, from playing any part in the interesting game. This was not the first time in his life that he had trodden the official path without the Bargello (a devilish creature that Madda! — at least such was his recollection of her). True, when he worked alone, he was not, as a rule, very lucky and had always had to capitulate ignominiously to Caminer in the end. But if, as he supposed, the present business concerned the august Maria Corleone, his discretion would not be appealed to in vain.

He saw the Grand Duke's slight figure at the writing-table, and the Prince nodded a little uneasily at his giant form as he entered. The Abate had never seen him at such close quarters, and thought he looked pitifully slight and delicate. The giant priest gave him a comforting smile, as if he were facing a terrified child, and tried to make the movements of his body as dainty and graceful as possible. Without looking at him, or indulging in any formal preamble, the Grand Duke asked him whether he knew what the situation in Livorno was. — "What a feeble voice," thought Don Vacca, "and yet his jealousy is so vigorous!" He gave a good-natured unctuous nod. He was fully informed and was in a position to supply daily reports, from which a fairly accurate notion could be formed of the people with whom Signor Guerra came into contact. The fat man again nodded comfortably. — "Poor man," he reflected kindly, "ask me anything you like; Maria Corleone has certainly not been to see Guerra again."

The Grand Duke was toying with his large ivory paper-knife.

"I hear all sorts of things," he said with an effort, "all kinds of rumours, as you may well understand, *Reverendo* — I have even heard that there is something in the nature of a conspiracy against Guerra, some idea of making an attempt upon his life — do you know anything about it?"

Don Lionello grew grave and attentive. He also seemed to become bigger and broader, as though he were puffing himself out. His brain, which was accustomed to spasmodic and tortuous thought, scented something sensational, and the pity of the massive frame for the frail body died down. That aged head over there, which had not yet looked up, was full of dark depths; he must be on his guard. — He replied firmly that he had heard nothing about it and also thought it improbable. It was true that since the February revolution in Paris a certain dissatisfaction had been felt with the Leader, owing to his political reserve; but certainly no one yet contemplated the madness of an attempt on his life, and since his famous speech

of the 7th of March, everybody had been at his beck and call again.

The Grand Duke passed his thin fingers over the sharp edge of the paper-knife, nodded faintly, and then suddenly raised his head. His pale, childlike, slightly protuberant eyes were fixed on the Canon.

"Pity!" he said aloud. Don Lionello was so much astonished by the sudden turn the conversation had taken that he retreated a step, smiling with embarrassment. The harassed Prince continued his blundering tactics and also tried to smile.

"Are you clever enough, *Reverendo*? Do you understand? Do we augurs need to wink at each other?"

Don Lionello stiffened. No, by all that was holy, he certainly did not understand His Highness. The Grand Duke chuckled strangely; his throat felt tight.

"Very good—very bright, Don Vacca! It is incomprehensible. . . . The attempt on that man's life must be quite incomprehensible, is that not so? . . . There are all sorts of people—you must know all sorts of people, *Reverendo*—well, one of them undertakes to go to Livorno—an incomprehensible fellow. . . ."

He stopped. Vacca stood perfectly still, like an inflated bladder, and said nothing. Only his fat cheeks quivered.

"Do you follow me?" the Prince exclaimed so loudly that his voice was almost a shout.

"No!" snarled Don Lionello through his teeth. The Prince pointed to the door with the paper-knife. But a moment later he wanted to call something after the broad back, to make a request—"Don't say anything to Caminer!" But he could not get the words out of his mouth. It was Don Vacca's custom, after any great shock in his life, to go to the Church of Santa Trinità and pray in the chapel dedicated to his patron saint, St. Bernard, who was always ready to help him in times of difficulty. And this he now proceeded to do.

The days slipped by; it was impossible, felt the Grand Duke, to hold a single day back. He saw the Bargello every day, and

every day Caminer gazed at him at least once long and steadily. As a rule, when he took his leave of him after his business was done, he said nothing. Did he know? The torture was intolerable.

On the 14th of March the Minister arrived at an unusually early hour. The Grand Duke was still dressing, broken down and wrecked by a sleepless night.

"I cannot endure it any longer!" he groaned. "I must know, before I hear your news. Did that fellow Vacca tell you what happened?"

"The same evening."

"Then why the devil have you tormented me all this time?"

"Tormented you?" Caminer inquired, shrugging his shoulders. "I am not your conscience, your Highness. On the contrary, I am your teacher in these dark forms of discipline. The only thing that grieved me was the unpleasant epithet which I felt I must apply to your unfortunate idea, and also, of course, that you showed lack of confidence. Otherwise I felt ashamed for your sake. One does not bare one's soul like that before strangers."

"What a way of speaking, my friend!" exclaimed the Prince angrily.

"A very gentle way of speaking for March 1848," Caminer replied with a smile. The Grand Duke was very pale.

"For Heaven's sake, tell me whatever you have to tell me!"

"The fitting reply to your humorous idea of an attempt on his life—Signor Gasto Guerra would be canonized by history!"

And he opened the hand containing a crumpled telegram, unfolded it carefully, and held it out with both hands to the Grand Duke. The latter read it again and again, as though it contained long sentences difficult to grasp. As a matter of fact, it consisted of three words only—"Revolution in Vienna."

3

Secrecy and a peculiar curse always attend the first shots fired in a revolution. It is as though some evil spirit, crouching over mankind like a cloud, and not human beings themselves, fired them. The shots are mysterious in their origin and aim, there is no need for them to lodge in any body; they suffice as a signal. In Vienna, as a matter of fact, shots did not mark the beginning. There had already been demonstrations in all the squares, and Radical sympathies prevailed in the council-chamber. Professors and students, with petitions to present, thronged the Imperial Palace, the troops were summoned to the town, an Archduke marched with his troops across the *Freiung*, stones were thrown, and the first shots were fired. At four o'clock fighting began in the suburbs, at half past six the Strong Man, whose accursed name had loaded the muskets of the rebels, was summoned to Court. Silenced, but not intimidated, he was forthwith dropped by the dynasty he had supported for fifty years; and at ten o'clock that evening, when shots were being fired in all directions, the Government made its first concessions. The following day, the 14th—the Emperor was meditating abdication, and the freedom of the press had already been granted—the fallen Minister was silently driving in a cab along the *Jägerzeile*, with his brave wife, on his way to Prince Karl Lichtenstein, one of the few aristocrats who had not deserted him. On reaching the outskirts of the city they stopped only to change vehicles and drove on, protected by the darkness, unrecognized and therefore unscathed. It took six hours of jolting over bad roads to reach Prince Lichtenstein's castle of *Feldsberg*. The fallen man was ill and groaning with pain. His great world had dwindled down to a rumbling old carriage. (Why not even narrower and darker, narrower and darker until it had shrunk into the end of all things, the coffin? He had always toyed with the thought of death. But this night surpassed in horror anything his clear brain could have imagined.) They reached their destination at four in the morning. The castle was naturally expecting no

visitors at that hour and was dark and cold. The Strong Man, used to every luxury the Age could provide, had to wait two hours before a bed was ready for him. He was seventy-five and felt the cold acutely.

Four days later, in the afternoon, the Schlossplatz in Berlin was thronged with people who showed no signs of wishing either to cheer or to curse; they were merely waiting for an opportunity to thank the bewildered monarch for his half-hearted concessions. But even their gratitude was tempered by suspicion and mistrust. For there stood the King's brother, a silent soldier, and probably the head of the officers' party, watching for some provocation to give him an excuse for shooting down the people, together with their demands. The feeling in the palace is not confident—be careful, brother! The crowd stood silently waiting, the sinister cloud descended and touched their heads, and the shots fell—only two, and possibly even these were fired automatically by two nervous grenadiers; at all events they were fired into the air and wounded nobody. Nevertheless they provided the signal and kindled the mad fury of the mob, with their fire-arms and their deathless dreams of barricades. Troops surrounded the palace, General Prittwitz, with the regiments of the guards, advanced, and a crowd of heroes—mere students, journalists, and workmen—soon converted the good old civilian Alexanderplatz, the corner of the Kronenstrasse and the Friedrichstrasse, and the sleepy grey bourgeois houses into a field of battle. General Prittwitz, who was a field-marshal, firing with professional coolness and lack of sentiment, advanced triumphantly, while the King, seriously ill, a prey to alternate fits of madness, religious mania, and petty fear, and clearly suffering from softening of the brain, ordered the troops to retire on the following day and humbly received the insurgents, who had been defeated at the barricades, in the court of the Palace. On the 21st he rode through the streets wearing the black, red, and gold—his spirit nauseated by the relentless year, which spewed the lukewarm out of its mouth.

Early on the 17th the Austrian Viceroy left Milan. On the 18th, in the streets that were still quiet, people read telegrams announcing that the Emperor had abolished the censorship and intended to open a general assembly of the Slav and German Diets and of the Lombardo-Venetian Central Congregation. But the National Directorate, which had been formed on the previous night, and whose first object was to prevent the masses from calming down, was busily engaged distributing circulars setting forth the Radical demands. At midday the demonstrations started. On the Piazza del Duomo armed students gave the demonstrators the appearance of soldiers, the church bells pealed, and at the Broletto, the Town Hall, arms were distributed. The tricolour was hoisted, barricades sprang up everywhere in the twinkling of an eye, the first shots were fired, Government House was taken, the power handed over to the municipality, and the department of the Chief of Police suppressed. The Archbishop, wearing the tricoloured cockade, gave the people his blessing. Whereupon the Iron Marshal, who was eighty-two, called the ten thousand men of the garrison to arms, fighting began, and Government House was recaptured. Men, women, and children were now killed, whether by guns, muskets, knives, or paving stones. Bohemian soldiers of the Paumgarten Regiment stormed the Broletto. The town would not give in, and the fighting continued on the 19th, duchesses, prostitutes, and children helping with the barricades; and coaches, gorgeously crowning the rebel earthworks, being turned into forts. The Marshal weighed the situation soberly. Anxious to husband his men, and too old to seek personal glory, he soon recognized the strategic strength of the hostile city, which constantly destroyed his communications. He accordingly evacuated it and proceeded to a blockade. On the morning of the 20th a tricolour was already floating over the angel on the Cathedral spire, while from church to church throughout the land the tocsins flung their garlands of insurrection. The whole of Lombardy, which was supplied by the postilions of the last Milan mail-coaches with bulletins of

victory and orders for mobilization, was in revolt before the garrison had received orders to march on Milan. The Marshal, threatened in his rear, retreated from Milan in the direction of Verona on the 22nd. The stubborn man saw but little change in his bright and warlike world. Every country bumpkin was accustomed to good luck and bad luck, and the retreat was more lucky than unlucky; his seasoned life would last until he could see Milan again. Such was the upshot of his cogitations, and in his own way he felt pleased with the crazy year.

Manin, the daring popular leader in Venice, who had just been rescued from prison by the cheering mob, told the Austrian Vice-Admiral on the 22nd, watch in hand: "I give you seven minutes to hand me over the keys of the arsenal!" The Austrian men-o'-war were flying the tricolour at their sterns; the Austrian Governor capitulated, and all non-Italian troops left the town. A Republic was proclaimed in Venice.

Tentenna, the King of the most important State in Italy, was not prepared for such blows of fate. Physically vigorous and brave, his crooked life had made him crafty, taciturn, and shifty. He was familiar with every aspect of the National cause; he had no illusions and was embittered against the Radicals, who called him a traitor and proved their contention with terrible force. In the middle of March he still preferred the old monarchy of the Danube before the upstart French Republic. Life under the Habsburg was quite pleasant, particularly after the fall of the Strong Man, whom he hated. In a word, republicanism meant the death of princes. And the Milan rebels were largely Republicans, as were also ninety per cent of the Venetians. The more astute of his advisers exploited his fears of Jacobinism. Did His Majesty wish to be caught between the Republics of France and Lombardy as it were between a pair of pincers? The people in the street cheered their brethren in Lombardy and booed the conquered barbarians. Jacobins in Turin? And if the Austrians fled unchecked, how could he possibly be rehabilitated? Was he,

after all, destined to be the liberator of Italy? The shock now had its effect, and *Tentenna's* heavy spirit and body turned towards the east. A general mobilization of troops was ordered on the evening of the 23rd, and on the 24th a proclamation was issued.—We must help our brethren and trust in God; the great hour had come! On the 26th troops were hurled against Milan, not so much with the object of fraternal succour as for the suppression of the Republican movement—Lodi, Cremona, eastward, eastward, as far as the Austrian barrage fire.

On the 23rd Guerra marched into Florence with the men of Livorno.

4

The city, particularly in the proletarian suburbs, thought the revolution had begun. According to rumours from the north, which filled the masses with alarm, republics had already been proclaimed in Vienna and Milan. It was also possible that agitators from Livorno had prepared the ground days in advance, without the Leader's knowledge and against his wishes. Nevertheless, the Government announced by means of posters, which were eagerly read and sceptically criticized, that the Unification of Italy was at hand, and conjured the people not to allow agitators to entice them into senseless and pernicious demonstrations. Moreover, Caminer, on instructions issued by Guerra on the previous night, had distributed the garrison, the Civic Guard, and the police over the town, and protected the most important streets and squares. The astonished people were in a state of feverish excitement. The inhabitants of San Frediano, who were expecting the rare treat of witnessing a battle between the troops and the insurgents, had collected in motley crowds before the gate of the city and were quite prepared to participate in the struggle when the opportunity arose. But matters developed differently. Guerra, who had brought, not only his guards, but also the garrison of Livorno with him (for all who had eyes to see, the order of march

was significant—Guerra, the garrison troops, the Radicals, and finally more garrison troops), was received at the gate by the Commandant of the place, who, courteously representing the authorities, remained at his side throughout the march of the column through the dumbfounded city.

The pugilist Guillotine, the chief of the Florentine burglars and an old pioneer in the Cause of Freedom, was standing at the corner of the Via de Serragli. Only an hour previously he had made up his mind that he and the janizaries he had rallied about him should play a more active part in the proceedings.

But the unexpected order that prevailed and the alarming number of uniforms forced his gang to retire to their hovels in the Via del Campuccio. Guillotine, with his rock of a chin, was standing at the corner of the street, a brave and solitary figure, anxious to give the great Guerra a sign of his old devotion. The Leader, self-possessed and smartly dressed, was riding by the side of the General, who, in his jingling uniform, covered with medals and orders, and with a plumed cap on his head, was engaging him in polite conversation. Guillotine was puzzled. What could he shout? In the first gush of enthusiasm over Guerra's arrival he had intended to cry: "Long live anarchy!" and a moment later he had thought perhaps the time had come at least for "Long live the Republic!" But now the time-honoured name of Guerra seemed more appropriate. In the end, however—for Guillotine was tactful and knew that he was a familiar figure all over the city—he bethought himself that a cheer from the lips of such a suspicious character as he was, although the law could not touch him, might possibly be unwelcome to the great Leader, or even injure him, seeing that he was in the exalted company of such a distinguished gentleman. So he contented himself with standing silently by and ostentatiously raising his hat. But as he was standing on the right-hand side of the street, and the great Guerra chanced to turn his head to the left just at that moment to face the General, the greeting remained unno-

ticed. Guillotine's low forehead puckered, so that his white forelock almost grazed his angry brows, and, putting his huge hat on his head again, he gazed sad and disappointed at Guerra's back and the shining brown croupe of the horse, which, with energetic whisks of its tail, was driving off the flies.

Even more conspicuous and less easily overlooked was the crowd of Ghetto Jews on the left-hand side of the Ponte Santa Trinità, marshalled under the leadership of the old fanatic Salomone. He was a poulterer, a useful member of the Party, and owner of that most terrible of all fever-dens in the Ghetto, known as the "Cortacce," which had already served as a refuge for the beggar Gioia and the Leader Guerra. For twenty years Salomone had believed in Guerra's Messianic mission to that little hotbed of misery in the Florentine Ghetto. And, truth to tell, to the poverty-stricken Jewish masses, who were still forced to live apart, and from generation to generation to be crushed body and soul by the gloomy, fetid, and inhuman hovels of their own peculiar quarter, the constitution did bring a certain limited amount of freedom. It did at least abolish the special police regulations and supervision to which they had been subjected. And that was as certainly Guerra's doing as the fact that he was now coming to depose the Prince. The generality of princes had been none too kind to the poor Jews. They tolerated only the rich ones, the useful bankers and doctors, and even if the Florentine Ghetto hardly knew the Grand Duke and had no cause for complaint against him, the French example of 1789 nevertheless remained before their eyes, and they held the firm belief that republics were good for the poor, even if they were Jews. Salomone, a man now well advanced in the sixties, stood there on his flat feet, gaunt, sallow, and cadaverous, and, raising both his hands, exclaimed with courteous simplicity:

"May the Eternal One bless and protect you, Signor Guerra."

Guerra, touched and somewhat embarrassed, shook his

hand. On the other side of the river stood the Palazzo Corleone, full of fateful memories. To be quite frank, the windows of the red drawing-room on the first floor, behind which figures seemed to be standing—he suddenly grew uneasy—were much more indelibly imprinted on his memory than this pathetic old man, whose devotion he did not quite understand, and who, after all, had stood by him only in the darkest hours of his life. But Salomone recalled to his mind the various features of the Cortacce—that tangled knot of stone and misery, that chaos of houses angrily grappling with each other, and the stairs, galleries, and people wriggling in their midst, Gioia's room at the back of the slaughter-house, stinking of meat and blood, and the cellar passage under the crazy pile in which Checca had been killed. He looked up at Maria Corleone's house. Salomone pressed Guerra's hand to his prickly beard, while the Jews behind him, pale bearded figures with fine eyes, suddenly shouted:

“Long live the President of the Republic!”

Guerra wrenched his hand roughly away—it was no easy matter to disentangle it from Salomone's bony fingers—and rode on without saying good-bye. But he could still see the old man's upturned eyes, tearful and reproachful. The Commandant of the town had been fingering his bandoleer impatiently.

“Dirty Jews!” he exclaimed quite audibly.

“Did you speak, General?” asked Guerra, turning to him and suddenly flushing.

The Commandant raised his shaven chin, which looked smooth and haughty between his side-whiskers, but made no reply. They rode across the bridge.

From the windows of the red drawing-room in the Palazzo Corleone the left bank of the Arno, the Ponte Santa Trinità, and the Via Tornabuoni, as far as the Church of Santa Trinità, could be seen. At one of the windows stood Maria Corleone, at another Madda.

The latter had left Paris on the day on which the *Capo* had shown her Guerra's cool letter saying he had asked Princess

Corleone to invite his sister to her country-house near Majano, in order to recuperate. Moreover, added the *Capo*, there was a revolution in Vienna. Madda, who was still confined to bed, immediately revived and got up. Hiding her joy, she set off at once, without waiting for a letter from the Princess. Her leaving of her husband was friendly, though brief, as was only becoming between them. But as soon as she had gone, the *Capo* paced madly up and down the room for an hour with his eyes growing ever smaller. At last flinging himself on her bed, he indulged in a short tempestuous fit of weeping. That night he seduced the servant, a stolid girl from the Pas de Calais, who was quite unmoved, and remained silent and stiff as a board. On the following day Maria Corleone's letter arrived. The *Capo* opened it without further ado; in it the Princess said she would be glad to see her old friend again. The *Capo* laughed, but with no apparent reason. Or possibly the reason was to be found in the exaggeratedly obscene letter which he shortly afterwards wrote to Baron Pompeo Caminer in Florence. Furthermore, he wrote to the Radical leaders in Turin, Milan, and Venice, as well as to Guerra, telling them that the Republican movement ought to give way to one in favour of a National uprising, which was far more important. In the letter to Guerra he said not a word about Madda.

Madda travelled *via* Marseilles, Genoa, and Lucca to Florence. She avoided Livorno, because she was afraid of Guerra. She had suddenly begun to feel anxious about her own safety and, doubting Maria Corleone's sincerity for a moment, did not enter Florence, but on reaching the city walls went straight on to Isola, the Princess's country-seat. Maria Corleone did not join her in the hills at once, but contented herself with writing a friendly though somewhat formal letter. The next day a further note arrived, telling her that she might come to Florence if she felt well enough. Madda obeyed. Maria Corleone welcomed her more cordially than she had expected. Claspings her hands tightly, she led her to the nearest window. They

looked at each other with some curiosity, though without the physical hostility of the old days.

"We poor things!" cried Maria Corleone, kissing her. Madda sealed the Princess's lips and checked the humble words that came from them with her mouth. Scrutinizing her closely through her lashes, she shook her head. No, there was no need to pity her yet! Maria Corleone withdrew her flushed face.

"Guerra is coming with his followers," she observed, filled with sudden disgust for Madda's dissipated mouth.

"There won't be any fighting, will there?" Madda asked in terror, her expression changing.

"We hope not."

The two women had gone over to the windows when it became known that Guerra had marched peacefully through the Porta San Frediano; and as the window bays were deep, they could not see each other.

"I hope you won't cause him any more uneasiness," Maria Corleone said after a pause.

"I?" cried Madda with a laugh. "How could I?"

"Well, then, I repeat — we poor things!" said Maria Corleone.

"No!" Madda repeated gently, still stubbornly contradicting her. "But do you know what he is like now?"

"Yes."

"When he visited us in Paris, he was always casting my age in my teeth. He is very unkind to me."

"Then why have you come here?"

Madda did not reply. They could see the Jewish deputation forming up at the end of the bridge.

"Fancy so many people loving him!" exclaimed Maria Corleone. Madda was silent. When the procession debouched from the Via Maggio, her knees trembled.

"He is unkind to me," she muttered in distress.

"Yes," agreed the Princess huskily, "it isn't right to throw a woman's age in her teeth."

"He is looking this way!" cried Madda.

"No," said Maria Corleone, "I believe he is utterly devoid of affection."

"No!" exclaimed Madda. The procession was crossing the bridge.

"Madda," the elder woman inquired excitedly, "has he ever really and truly loved?"

"Not you or me," Madda stammered, "but a little laundry-maid of fifteen with long plaits."

"Fifteen!" Maria Corleone repeated.

"If she is still alive she must be thirty by now," Madda cried gleefully; "that is what time does for all of us!"

"He has probably forgotten all about her," observed the Princess absent-mindedly.

"I wonder whether he'll look up," said Madda.

"No," replied the Princess.

"And if he does look up, shall we wave to him?"

"Yes," muttered Maria Corleone.

Guerra rode down the somewhat steep incline of the bridge, but he did not look up. His eyes were fixed on something lower than he was on the right. The two women noticed this, but could not see what he was looking at, and neither dared to lean out of the window. Guerra rode slowly by, his staring eyes turned to whatever it was that had attracted his attention, and keeping it steadily in view as he passed. Suddenly he raised his hand to his brow and in hushed tones cried: "Halt!" Both women had turned away from the window and were looking at each other.

* * * * *

As luck would have it, a woman, about thirty years of age, heavy with child, happened to be coming along the bank of the Arno from the Ponte Vecchio, with her market basket on her arm. She joined the crowd near the Palazzo Corleone on the corner of the Ponte Santa Trinità.

"What is happening?" she inquired.

"Why, Guerra is coming," they told her.

"Oh, Guerra!" she repeated, and remained standing beneath the windows of the red drawing-room. As Guerra approached, her eyes began to start out of her head, and her jaw dropped.

"Who is that next to the officer?" she asked excitedly, elbowing her way to the front.

"Why, Guerra, young woman," replied a good-natured fat man who was standing beside her; and he laughed and winked his lashless eyes. "He is a fine man, young woman. Don't look at him too long!"

When Guerra's eyes met hers, she turned faint, and her basket slipped from her arm and dropped. Her good-natured neighbour caught it, looked anxiously at two little round rolls which had jumped out of it and fallen under the hoofs of the horses, and then gazed reproachfully at their unconscious owner, who had turned alarmingly white and did not even seem to have noticed her loss. It was certainly strange! A smile flitted across her thin drawn face, which had evidently been beautiful once, and she looked unspeakably happy. But the next moment she was retching and vomiting. Those about her did all they could to help her, first and foremost among them the good-natured fat man, who declared, not without a certain subtle irony, that the young woman would certainly not have been sick at the sight of the *Serenissimo*, for instance, or even of the Minister, Caminer.

"Halt!" cried Guerra huskily, dazed by the wild beatings of his heart, and unconsciously reining in his horse.

"But, for Heaven's sake, Signor Guerra," exclaimed the Commandant shrilly. He was already irritated. "What on earth for? — Because a woman with child happens to be sick?"

Guerra rode on and turned round in his saddle. The people who were attending to Maria Pia completely hid her face from view. He cast a confused and anxious glance up at the windows of the red drawing-room. Nobody was standing there. —

Maria Corleone and Madda stared sadly at each other.

"Do you know what he was looking at, Maria?" said Madda. "A woman!"

"But he has not stopped," replied Maria Corleone, trying to smile. And, indeed, the procession, with its ringing of horses' hoofs and marching soldiers, passed on.

5

When the first wild reports arrived from Milan, followed by the news of Guerra's approach, one or two members of the Court circle had advised the Grand Duke to leave Florence. But the blind Minister gently, and Caminer rudely, pointed out that desertion at such a moment would seal both his own fate and that of the dynasty.

"You have to learn, your Highness," declared the Prime Minister, with gentle conciseness, "that you do not belong to the defeated Austrians, but to the victorious Italians."

"And even if that way of putting it may possibly be contradicted by the ultimate course of events," added Caminer, "it is nevertheless of the greatest value for the moment. For Heaven's sake, do not spoil the complicated plans both Signor Guerra and I have made to hold the masses in check."

But the Grand Duke had not the smallest intention of leaving Florence. He had merely raised the question at the Cabinet meeting to hear the Minister's views. He regarded his own life as far from secure, and, like the majority of the citizens, he would not have been at all surprised if Guerra had brought revolution and chaos to Florence. But he was no coward, and, especially during the last few days, when events seemed to be heading ever more inevitably and rapidly towards the abyss, he had begun to regard a dignified bearing as a duty, a necessity, perhaps the only means of salvation. He knew that Caminer had been corresponding with Guerra regarding the prevention of disturbances during the march into Florence. But he failed to have any clear idea of what Guerra was aiming at

and thought the Bargello was being deceived. Or possibly he was a prey to suspicions both old and new.

"If it were not for our secret alliance, my dear friend," he observed with a tremulous laugh to Caminer when they were alone, "I should soon be forced to the conclusion that you were delivering me into his hands."

Caminer gazed sadly at him.

"It's the other way round, surely," he replied, "or — though at present it may sound improbable — he will be engaged and later on dismissed, not so much by you as by contemporary history. For, after all, the only thing you are called upon to do is to affix your signature — either to the warrant conferring an order upon him or to the sentence of the Court Martial."

And he laughed uneasily.

"You may be making a great mistake," said the Grand Duke.

"That is possible," Caminer admitted, "above all, if you fall in love with him again. That would lead to tragedy."

The Grand Duke pretended he had not heard, and examined his hands.

"I am inclined to think," he observed, "that he may not have forgiven me for having tried to set Don Lionello on to him a week ago."

"That is hardly likely," said Caminer, "and the conquest of such suspicions prevents a man from indulging in sentimentalities."

"It strikes me," said the Prince, smiling once more, "that you and I do little else than accuse each other at intervals of a certain partiality for this fellow."

"And possibly neither of us is mistaken."

"What, in spite of Elba, the telegrams to Austria, the attempt at assassination, and now this idea of dismissal?"

"That is all politics! It is only women who cannot keep these things separate."

The Grand Duke had no wish to respond to the last remark

and did not even acknowledge it with a look of either reproach or disapproval, although Caminer seemed to be expecting it.

"For instance, his sister, Madda, is with the Princess again," the ruddy man continued.

He stopped and again waited. The Prince's lips moved, but he could not think of the right words, and he stroked the grey lock on his brow nervously.

"You might have kept that piece of news to yourself to-day," he exclaimed in sudden anger. "It irritates me — on the Princess's account. I knew nothing about it." Caminer nodded thoughtfully.

"When, seventeen years ago, your Highness," he said gently, "I gave you a similar piece of news, you also knew nothing about it, but you declared that you did, in order to shield the Princess. Today, at all events, that is no longer necessary."

"Has this man still —" the Grand Duke wanted to ask a distressing question, but he checked himself with a hasty movement of his hand and merely inquired: "Does this fact affect us at all?"

Caminer pursed his lips, thrust the point of his red beard forward, and moved it up and down. He looked ridiculous. But at last he was able to reply, though in his excitement his voice still sounded husky.

"It means, among other things, as far as I am concerned — for me personally, very great suffering, the opening up of an extremely painful old wound. . . ."

"I beg your pardon, my dear friend," the Grand Duke interrupted coldly — he was not accustomed to such confessions — "but what has that to do with me?"

Caminer raised a finger and in tones at once distressed and cunning began to explain.

"Allow me, your Highness; it is a matter of sentiment, of the dangerous kind. We must help each other, must we not? The fact that I feel partial to the brother, perhaps only because I am in love with the sister, is a matter which concerns myself alone. But the fact that, through the sister, I may become

weak enough to be weak towards the brother, that, if I may say so, is a matter of politics. In that case you might suddenly be alone, quite alone — or in the same position as myself, with the Princess and his sister behind the rat-catcher."

The Grand Duke felt his fingers growing numb. He spread them out and examined them. Then looking up again, he fixed his gaze on Caminer's brow in order to avoid meeting his eyes. It was no disgrace to show a little fear before this wild spirit.

"What do you actually want?" he inquired, although he knew the answer. "How can I help you?"

Caminer had almost recovered his spirits again.

"Let us make a reinsurance contract," he replied boldly; "if I grow weak, you will know why, and without indulging in too many reproaches you will take the instruments I happen to be using at the time out of my hands, and use them yourself, soberly and without sentiment, as they should be used. And I too, for my part, shall feel, not only permitted, but in duty bound, to do the same."

At this moment an orderly entered with the news that Guerra had marched through the Porta San Frediano. With nervous haste the Grand Duke threw open a window and listened for any signs of disturbance in the town. Then, trembling with fear, he clenched his teeth in an effort to control himself. He said no more. Caminer folded his arms and, calm and pensive, rested his chin on his hand. Orderlies arrived at short intervals bringing reports of the march. They were all the same — the procession was passing San Frediano quite peacefully, San Spiritu, Via Maggio; there were occasional cheers. The Prince nodded silently at each report. There was a delegation of Jews on the Ponte Santa Trinità, and some cries of "Long live the President of the Republic!" The Grand Duke nodded and remained perfectly calm.

"Fancy so many people loving him!" was all he said, when the orderly withdrew.

"Now he is going past the Palazzo Corleone," observed Caminer, preparing to go, in order to be present at the prelimi-

nary negotiations in the Government Palace. He made his way along the picture-gallery, which joined the Palazzo Pitti to the Uffizi, across the Via dei Guicciardini and the Ponte Vecchio. Through the windows he could see, forming as it were a sacred background, the Convent of San Miniato, bathed in the golden rays of the setting sun. He stopped a moment, impressed by this evidence of divinely cheerful contempt for human affairs.

6

The old servant entered the library and announced that the gentlemen had arrived. He called them "Their Excellencies." The Grand Duke had been expecting them; the interval of waiting had been painful, because it had given his mind time to get busy with all manner of anxieties and to undermine his self-possession. He sprang to his feet immediately, with a sense of relief and energy. The old servant squinted up at him with compassionate excitement as he bowed, and the Prince behaved as he had never done before—he patted the man kindly on the shoulder and muttered a few cheering and unconventional words, which at once convinced the old servant of the errors of the Age, and inspired him with a firm belief that the Grand Duke would never be overthrown. The world to which he was accustomed seemed to be restored again and endowed with strength to support even his old body. He walked with great dignity and confidence before the Prince, holding up the candle like a flag. When he reached the door behind which the five gentlemen were waiting with the fateful demands they had decided to make, he performed all the time-honoured ceremonies. He set the candlestick on the little sideboard, opened the folding doors with both hands, and, with one glance informing the company that the power of tradition was still unimpaired, announced in measured, pompous tones: "*Serenissimo!*"

Stepping aside, he ventured to cast a look full of affectionate

confidence at the Prince as he entered. The Grand Duke might have had good reason to convey by a faint nod his appreciation of the man who had ushered him in, for although at first he had observed his solemn movements with a calm smile, he had felt a moment later in both body and soul how right he was. But now his dignity did not allow him to take any notice of his herald.

The five gentlemen, who were sitting round an oval table, sprang to their feet—including the blind Minister, though, owing to the fact that he did not dare to let go of his chair, he stood slightly bowed and could only turn his head towards the Grand Duke. The latter strode briskly and confidently into the room and greeted the company with haughty disdain. Caminer, who was standing near the Prime Minister, looked at him in astonishment. Guerra, who was on the other side of the table, between Scaleterra and Bottai, was far from pleased by His Highness's buoyant demeanour, which reminded him of his cheer for himself on the night of the September petition. "The man is recalcitrant," he thought; and he assumed his most stony expression as a warning and a reply. They were in March 1848!

The Prince advanced to the red velvet arm-chair awaiting him. It was an austere and attractive little throne of Florentine workmanship of the best period. Sitting erect and alert, with the six balls of the Medici arms beautifully carved in the brown wood above his head, he gripped the griffin heads on the arms of the chair with his hands. With a vague feeling of irritation Guerra sat down almost as soon as the Grand Duke did, without awaiting his invitation; and, with some hesitation, the others followed suit. Only the blind man still remained standing, listening uneasily and looking strangely forlorn. Today he seemed oddly detached from the others, and felt ill at ease. Caminer pulled him gently into his seat.

The Grand Duke looked at Guerra for the first time and would have liked ironically to take him to task for his obviously intentional breach of Court etiquette. But Guerra's mar-

ble features were not to be moved by a mere word. And at the same moment he remembered — and, in an instant, all the hostility of the Age, with its bewildering intricate connexion with Guerra, flashed through his mind — that the fellow could allow himself the liberty of being rude. Passing his hands through his grey locks, he sat stiffly erect. Seated, he seemed taller than Guerra, or was it his chair that was higher?

“Signor Guerra, please!” he said. It was an odd way of opening the proceedings. Guerra did not answer, did not even nod, but merely raised his eyebrows. — “The two men are wholly devoid of humour,” thought Caminer, who was watching attentively; “they take themselves infernally seriously — but, then, we all do that, so that we may come to our tragic scene.”

“Signor Scaletterra, then,” the Grand Duke continued, looking at the journalist, whose intelligent eye pleased him. Scaletterra made a slight bow. With bottomless, almost stinging contempt the Prince’s eye passed over Marchese Bottai and turned calmly to the blind man on the other side of the table.

“Well, then, your Excellency, I call upon you, if you please,” he said. Guerra, who was hot and flushed — he had been in a rage for the last hour or two (what was it that had happened on the Ponte Santa Trinità? Scaletterra, the scrutator, asked himself once again) — saw the Governor go pale to the lips with fury and immediately interrupted the proceedings:

“The gentleman at my side is Marchese Bottai!” he exclaimed.

It occurred to the Grand Duke, who had lost his composure, that the incident was uncalled for and might possibly do him harm, but he could put it right at once with a nod. — However, he turned his head too slowly and too provocatively to the interrupter. It was that fellow Guerra who had dared to shout at him — the man whom he had never lifted a finger to beckon into his life, but who had planted himself in the middle of it before he had even heard his hateful name, the stealer of hearts, the anarchist. What was he like? His eyes were

malicious and sea-green, and his brows projected over them with savage prominence. Anger was dilating the nostrils of his straight nose and making his courageous mouth open, while there was not much consideration to be expected from his chin, at least at that moment. Nevertheless he liked the man's face! But who did not?

The Grand Duke raised his head and turned aside.

"Let us begin, your Excellency," he said.

"Marchese Bottai . . ." Guerra repeated in low threatening tones.

"I have heard it already," replied the Prince sharply, "and I am also aware that there are men of honour who bear that name."

For a moment the five men did not move. Caminer's jaws had dropped slightly and he began to fear for the Prince's reason. But in a moment Bottai, with eyes staring stonily in front of him, rose from his chair, moved slowly from the table, and took two rapid strides towards the door.

"Pray don't go, dear friend," exclaimed Guerra, who now seemed perfectly calm. And, taking his watch from his pocket, he laid it on the table in front of him. "Within five minutes the Prince will apologize to you. If he does not, I shall go out with you. And then the Prince will learn that it will be impossible to bring me back to the conference table again, and that the consequences will be irrevocable as far as he personally is concerned."

The Grand Duke gazed up at the ceiling and pursed his lips. Caminer saw that the situation had become exceedingly grave and ventured to take a bold step.

"With all due respect, your Highness," he cried, "I protest against the insult offered to a high-minded patriot and man of honour!"

The Grand Duke cast a fleeting glance at him and smiled. The blind man frowned.

"I associate myself with that protest," he said, as if from a distance.

"I observe," said Guerra ruthlessly, "that the Prince is in a minority of one."

The Grand Duke had ceased to smile and his cheeks twitched. But he said nothing. Bottai went up to him, the Prince leant slightly to one side, and Bottai bent over and whispered in his ear:

"If you have the courage, the decency, and the dignity to sign your abdication now, you will not need to apologize."

The Grand Duke turned his head slowly towards him, his thick under lip drawn up as though he were overcoming some physical pain.

"My lord Marchese," he said, unnecessarily loudly, and seizing the griffin heads right and left, "you see that I am keeping my seat! So you are rehabilitated in every sense of the word! I have every reason to apologize to you!"

Bottai bowed his head and went back to his place with a pained expression on his face. Guerra put his watch back into his pocket.

"As time is short," he observed calmly, "and I have promised my followers to give them the proclamation before midnight, I should like this conference to proceed to a decision immediately. I imagine that none of us feels disposed to engage in diplomatic dialogues. Let us throw our cards on the table. The game is perfectly simple. The Prince must decide between the alternatives of either going with us, or else abdicating his powers—or, shall we say, his representative rights? That is the real point at issue—not a debate on the separate items in the proclamation."

The Grand Duke pressed his thin hands together and looked up to the ceiling.

"Would you be so good as to tell me what the separate items in the proclamation are?" he asked in low tones.

"Reconstruction of the Cabinet," replied Guerra, "so as to include the three representatives of the National movement here present; formal withdrawal of the Grand Duke from the Imperial House of Austria; declaration of war on Austria, and

the handing of his papers to the Ambassador of the monarchy; mobilization of the troops and the volunteer corps, and their immediate junction with the fighting forces of the North Italian National Army."

The Prince, who was not looking at the speaker, had half-closed his eyes as though he were sleepy. His voice grew fainter and fainter, and his lips hardly moved:

"Are the items in this proclamation known to the Ministry as hitherto constituted?" he asked. The blind man and Caminer nodded. The Grand Duke looked at the Prime Minister and whispered emphatically: "And what about the objections?"

The blind man either did not divine his helplessness or refused to recognize it.

"We found no objections," he replied calmly, "nor did we look for any."

The Grand Duke's eyes were turned to Caminer, who was beginning to feel pity for him.

"The word 'war' is objectionable enough," he said with embarrassment (possibly he was only trying to give the Grand Duke an argument), "but the Age has no regard for that."

Guerra meant "war." Guerra could not help smiling, but he did not allow himself to utter the flippant remark which was on the tip of his tongue. Caminer looked down at the table.

"I hate war!" exclaimed the Grand Duke suddenly in a voice that sounded husky. "Old as I am, I have been able to manage without it up to the present. Are not any of you gentlemen going to second me in this? For I know that some of you are familiar enough with the idea of humanity. Is not one going to help me to maintain a neutrality which would yet be favourable to the National cause? Surely such an attitude is possible?"

His eyes wandered once more from one to the other and rested on Guerra's face. The latter, feeling a vague inspiration, had glanced quickly over at Caminer. The Bargello did

not even raise his head, and suddenly beads of sweat stood out on his brow. The Prince flushed and the veins in his neck could be seen beating wildly.

"I alone know," said Guerra, speaking slowly and deliberately, "whether or not I am indifferent to the life or death of the masses, be they driven or led. And you alone know whether or not you have ever meditated the destruction of other people's lives. Personally I doubt your honesty at this moment."

The Prince's under lids grew deep red and twitched faintly as though they were pulsating, and his livid hands, which he had pressed to his breast right and left, trembled too and looked thin and transparent against the black cloth.

"That is no answer," he replied with an effort; "is neutrality possible or not?"

"That is not a legitimate question!" cried Guerra excitedly. "When the people themselves are marching to battle, there can be no neutrality! And when the people are marching, they don't care a rap for your favours! And when they have done the dirty work, they will certainly not be prepared to strike any favourable bargain over the Crown!"

The Prince shrugged his shoulders and, sitting back in his chair, pulled himself together as though he had been roused by Guerra's brutality. — "Why does he behave like this to me?" he asked himself. "Why is he trying so hard to chastise me, if it is not because of my foolish idea of making an attempt on his life, which, after all, he can know nothing about? Surely I am less of an obstacle in his path than he is in mine!"

Guerra was stirred by his look of mingled astonishment and reproach. — "I should never have believed," he thought, "that I could have been so hard on this man — I really do not know why I have been!"

"Signor Guerra," said the blind man, raising a hand, "the Grand Duke has not yet uttered a word about standing as a candidate for the National Crown. Your last sentence was therefore unnecessarily offensive."

"Pray do not trouble about that, Marchese," interjected the Prince, overjoyed by this unexpected support. "Signor Guerra unfortunately knows what I have said to that effect and has no reason to spare me today."

Guerra, not over-pleased with himself, said nothing. Caminer looked silently from one to the other.

"Signor Guerra has never dreamt of standing in the way of the Grand Duke's candidature," interposed Scaleterra, to whom the Leader's violent tone was far from pleasing, "or regarding it as any more hopeless than that of any other Italian sovereign. I do not consider his remark either insulting or capable of being misunderstood. The candidate for the National Crown could not of course witness the War of Liberation like a guest at manœuvres. That is what he meant."

"Of course!" replied the Prince, nodding gratefully at the journalist, and feeling that his position had grown stronger. "But we have wandered from the point.—Signor Guerra, I am ready to accept the reconstruction of the Cabinet without reserve and to renounce my rights and dignities as an Austrian Archduke. But is it not possible for you to postpone the declaration of war for a few days?"

"No!" declared Guerra.

"But understand what I am saying!" exclaimed the Grand Duke with greater emphasis. "All I am now concerned about is to know the decision of my exalted ally of Piedmont. Milan and I are not alone in the world. One surely cannot take a plunge in the dark!"

"What is it you want?" demanded Guerra. "Milan is free and so are Venice, Parma, Modena, and Ferrara. The Marshal is galloping back along the Adige, and Vienna has no time for him. Piedmont will open the attack tomorrow or even today."

Suddenly the unexpected happened. The Prince, leaning across the table, seized Guerra's hand.

"Guerra," he pleaded, "I implore you — my God, it is hard enough for me! — but I implore you from the bottom of my

heart to wait another forty-eight hours, until I have consulted Turin!"

A kindly warmth entered Guerra's eyes. — "He is not dishonest," he reflected.

"Your Highness," he replied gently, "then I cannot support you. I confess that I cannot keep the strong Radical wing of my followers in hand any longer. If I give in to you, the Tuscan Republic will not be established in forty-eight hours, but this very night!"

The Grand Duke closed his eyes and reflected.

"So you wish to support me, Guerra?" he asked at length.

"Yes," rejoined Guerra, immediately dropping the dangerous note of friendly familiarity. "I do, for I am the official of the movement, which obviously wishes to avoid upheavals in particular States in view of the wider object of National Independence."

The Prince would not give in.

"But you as a man, Guerra? Even if you wished to support me as a man also — for we have known each other some time, Guerra — then I should find it easier to give in."

"I certainly do not leave the man out," replied Guerra in distress.

The Grand Duke drew himself up, alert and extraordinarily resolute. He would accept the proclamation and undertake to answer for all its consequences. Scaleterra, who had fallen a prey to the Prince's charm and was anxious to please him, commented on the political and dynastic advantages of this decision as they affected the Republican aims in liberated States; besides which it would have its definite value if he were the first of the Italian sovereigns. . . . The Grand Duke interrupted him kindly and said it was to be hoped that Piedmont would not hesitate any longer, and that possibly he himself was less ambitious than people appeared to suppose. He spoke as though he had overcome his excitement and quickly left the stirring debate of the last few minutes far behind him. Guerra, Caminer, and the blind man

were astonished at such recuperative capacity, and thought it suspicious. Guerra, above all, from whom at the very last moment that fatal and apparently decisive personal avowal had been extracted, did not feel that he had emerged triumphant.

"The proposals for the new Cabinet, please," said the Grand Duke with perfect serenity. "I take it that you, Signor Guerra, wish to be President."

"He is a better comedian than I have been," thought Guerra.

"By no means," he replied, in not over-friendly tones. "You are exaggerating my ambition. We think it most important that the present Prime Minister, whose distinction places him above party, should make the by no means small sacrifice of retaining his post."

The five men looked towards the blind Minister, who, feeling their eyes upon him, began to move his brows.

"Thank you, Signor Guerra," he said calmly and courteously, "I shall remain, because, after all, it is my duty." Then turning his clear brow to the Prince, he added: "I certainly do not feel very happy about accepting the position. I should prefer to live in a clearer atmosphere."

The Prince averted his gaze. "Why does he appear to accuse me, the one who is being assailed, and not Guerra?" he asked himself.

"The other ministerial posts," he added hastily, "you and your friends will of course take over, Signor Guerra. But how about Baron Caminer? Is he to remain in office? I obviously attach great value to his long experience in his department, at least from the standpoint of domestic administration, as Chief of Police, for instance."

Guerra looked at the Bargello, who, strange to say, was smiling.

"Personally," he declared, feeling a weight on his chest, "I have no objection."

"I regard it as inopportune," exclaimed Scaleterra.

"The discussion is unnecessary," interposed Caminer, pull-

ing a foolish grimace. "I refuse to accept any office—in the interest of the country's domestic peace."

7

Guerra had the extraordinary good fortune to be brought the news of *Tentenna's* decision in favour of war, and of Piedmont's order for general mobilization at ten in the evening, in the middle of the jubilations over the proclamation. The Leader was standing with his staff in the Loggia dei Lanzi, brilliantly lighted by torches—an ideal platform for a popular orator—and was looking down on the raving mob.

War! War! War! and repeated cries of "Death to the Austrians!"

Guerra was not happy. He felt strangely oppressed by the horror of the day. Were the Austrian dead who were being demanded, and the Italian dead who were being offered, to constitute the meaning and pinnacle of his life—the work of his life? Was it impossible to escape the horrible *double entendre* of his name, which was now constantly being roared from one end of the square to the other?

He looked to the right. The mad tumult of the Piazza hardly reached as high as the white thighs of the stone statue of David. And the Palazzo Vecchio behind him, standing cold and mighty in the night, seemed to be stamping the crazy Piazza into the earth; its lowest steps could hardly hear the tumult and hubbub below. The serene calm of the monuments was soothing; but his throat was sore from the enormous strain he had imposed upon it proclaiming the political triumph at the top of his voice for almost an hour to the masses, whom, with the last exciting news from Turin, he had roused to a state of wild and boundless enthusiasm for the National cause. His eyes smarted from the bright flames of the torches, which were too close; even the skin of his face was burning, as though it had grown sensitive beneath the fierce light and the impact

of popular passions. Guerra the public man could no longer endure himself.

He looked round the Loggia. Scaleterra was leaning against the parapet, with his back to the Piazza, gazing wearily in front of him. Bottai was walking up and down behind; it seemed as though he could not rest, unable to efface from his features the imprint of the insult the Grand Duke had levelled at him. Menozzi was standing, a massive figure, by one of the stone lions on the steps, scratching his beard, lost in moody meditation. The Leader's triumph, and, above all, the news from Turin, must inevitably lead to the breaking up of the Radical wing of the Party, of which he was the chief. Guerra observed that there appeared to be but little rejoicing among the victors in Orcagna's noble hall.

The crowds below the steps, who were gazing up at him in their foolish way, observing every one of his movements and filled with admiration of all he did, made it impossible for him to slip away unnoticed. He summoned his two old soldiers to him. They had been standing, armed, right and left below the two lions. They hurried up and seemed pleased to move. Orestes looked tired and was, as usual, extremely solemn. But unadulterated joy still shone on Othello's face, as the result of all that had happened. As he had been forced to be silent for a long while, he was bursting to speak.

"The most glorious day of our lives, Signor Guerra!" he exclaimed, boldly formulating his feelings. Orestes thought fit to protest.

"It may be your most glorious day, for all I care," he observed scornfully, "but you can't tell whether it has been mine as well, and to speak as though you knew Signor Guerra's mind into the bargain is confounded cheek!"

Guerra found these two familiar figures, who presented such a contrast to each other, refreshing. They stood between him and the Piazza as though they were trying to protect him. They shielded him from the eager stare of his admirers at the foot of the steps. A sort of malicious joy seized him at the

thought of being no longer visible. He could now say things which were no concern of the ten thousand people on the Piazza, or might even be interpreted as mockery both of himself, the Great Guerra, and of the Great Hour that had just struck. He accordingly let himself go and laughed. His voice was still hoarse.

"The most glorious day, my old friends, and we are all brothers, and we are going to kill all the rest! That is our simple way of creating a new paradise. Our most glorious day! . . . Of course, Othello *mio*; and I am Minister of War, as is only right and proper; for I understand a good deal about war and very little about peace, as I have proved. And I reward heroes from the very beginning—so I promote you first, Othello. What should you like to be?"

Orestes opened his blind eye a little; he was a thinker and understood all manner of things. But for Othello the moment was one of breathless significance.

"Sergeant . . ." he muttered, pale with joy.

"Keep close together, my friends!" cried Guerra, feeling strangely elated. "I can promote you more easily if I cannot see the other heroes between you.—Why sergeant, Othello? Modesty is not so very far removed from cowardice! You are sergeant-major! And what about you, Orestes?"

"It has not been my most glorious day by any means," the one-eyed man replied vaguely. "But perhaps you have had enough for today and would like to go, Signor Guerra."

Guerra laughed until he shook.

"Ay, three times three, my friend!" he replied quickly. "You deserve a high order and are worth more than a Secretary of State! For Heaven's sake, try to get me a carriage!"

With a sharp twist of his neck Orestes looked at his friend beside him and smiled—a rare occurrence with him. Othello nevertheless turned to the right-about in military fashion, while Orestes, in order to emphasize the peculiarity of the situation, moved away like a slovenly civilian. Father Menozzi, who had

been watching the strangely furtive merriment of the group and had been waiting for some time for an opportunity of having a word or two with the Leader, out of sight of the Piazza, came up to Guerra.

"You have every reason to be in good spirits, Signor Guerra," he began, making an effort to look friendly.

"Certainly!" Guerra replied absent-mindedly. "But don't you wish to add a political rider, *Reverendo*?"

Menozzi gently thrust his beard forward.

"If you like," he replied with a grin, "but only a technical one of some importance. Are you expecting the Livornese Party forces to take the field?"

Guerra understood. This was one of the most insidious questions he could possibly have been asked. It had an extremely important bearing upon the security of conditions at home, and he had often considered it and thought over it before. Nevertheless, he feigned unconcern.

"Of course!" he rejoined.

"H'm!" exclaimed Menozzi. "There's no of course about it, for the troops are worthless from a military point of view. On the other hand, in securing the political gains they may be very useful."

"As a unit," said Guerra, "it will of course have to be disbanded and the men drafted to their respective military formations. And as to the political gains, my dear friend, they will be secured, not here, but on the field of battle."

"Signor Guerra," Menozzi observed, shaking his beard, "let me advise you not to dream of disbanding our Party troops."

Guerra left him standing there. He had no wish to continue the discussion; moreover, it was hardly necessary to decide the point that night.

"But you would like to be rid of us, Signor Guerra!" Menozzi called after him.

Guerra answered back over his shoulder that he would order the disbanding when it suited his convenience—and that would suffice.

"Do you think so?" Menozzi retorted, and he laughed with an ugly shake of his beard.

The carriage fought its way laboriously from the Por Santa Maria through the crowd. And it was only when it occurred to Othello, who was gesticulating wildly on the step, to shout to them to make way in Guerra's name that the people fell back. Guerra invited Bottai and Scaleterra to drive with him, and the alacrity with which they both accepted delighted him. Hurrying down the steps, he raised his hat to the shouting, cheering mob, without looking at them. His two friends followed. The carriage had some difficulty in turning. But presently the faces right and left of the windows sped past more quickly, and ultimately vanished in the darkness.

The three men, for whom rooms had been booked in one of the best hotels along the riverside, did not have much to say to each other. A certain embarrassment seemed to have overcome them. Moreover, Guerra was more preoccupied by Menozzi's covert threat than he had intended to be. As soon as they reached their destination, they separated, and Guerra, who had not paid and dismissed the driver, left the hotel a few minutes later. As he did so, he saw a man approach him from the shadow of the doorway. Seized with sudden deadly fear, he leaped three steps and jumped into the carriage. Shouting two words to the driver, he quickly closed the door, leant well back into the musty-smelling dilapidated leather upholstery behind, and bent low so as to avoid the expected shot. "Attempts on my life," he mused, in feverish anxiety, "may come from two quarters — from Caminer or Menozzi." The carriage rattled on, the noise of the wheels drowned a cry, and the echo of a tenor voice remained ringing in his ears. Damn his overwrought nerves! That was not a strange voice! Was it Renzo Maddii? Nevertheless he did not stop the carriage and did not even look through the glass at the back. It did not take long to reach the Palazzo Corleone. For a moment the lamps on the opposite bank danced up and down on the right

window, a couple of lamps on the near side flooded the carriage with a pale cream light, and then it drew up at the door which was still illumined. A man running could have reached the house almost as quickly. Handing a gold piece to the driver, Guerra rapidly surveyed the situation. But the magnificent porter in his admiral's hat—an old and useful ally of Don Lionello—was still standing at the door and prevented him from looking back along the quay.

Maria Corleone and Madda were expecting him. He had sent Orestes that afternoon with a brief note, in which he said that he would come in the course of the evening, but could not say precisely when. The note was addressed to the Princess, which led the two ladies to conclude that he did not know that Madda was already in Florence.

The two women had been accustomed to wait for him. The interval since they had last done so seemed to be forgotten and the same uneasiness returned, which made conversation difficult and ultimately put an end to it altogether. They could not help thinking of those nights in Isola, when the darkness of the park had stood before the window like a closed cathedral, uncanny, inhuman, and still, with its silent murmur. The two women alone knew that the park lied with its blasphemous pretence of divine serenity and that in its eastern corner the little cottage lay hid where Guerra and the conspirators were eagerly discussing matters of life and death. And they would wait with uneasy, anxious, mistrustful hearts for the luminous signal announcing the departure of the Party officials and informing them that the Leader was ready to speak to them.—They now referred to the past with a touching humility towards both it and their youth, which in itself made the memories a source of joy, bitter and dark though they were. "And do you remember," or "Can you still see"—thus they opened their whispered questions, scarcely waiting for the answer, which was so obvious. "And that singer with the lovely voice who gave the signal—do you remember the song he always sang?"—"The harvest song of the wine-growers of the

Chianti valley."—"Yes, yes, that is how it began!" And Maria Corleone hummed the first bars—"Yes, and what was his name?"

"Renzo," replied Madda, "Renzo Maddii, a thin surly fellow. He was very fond of me."

And here the reminiscences ended. Possibly the mention of Renzo's love was uncalled for. What had it to do with the song signal and waiting for Guerra? Maria Corleone gazed at her companion and, folding her hands in her lap, remained silent. "Why mention the fact that in those days men loved us?" she reflected. "The Grand Duke loved me too!"—

The lordly porter, who was mysteriously well-informed regarding the course of events in the Palazzo Vecchio, the Grand-ducal Palace, and on the Piazza, sent in footmen bearing the news to the ladies as fast as it arrived. Thus they knew all about the new Ministry, the resignation of Caminer, the Proclamation, and the Turin telegram. The oft-repeated name of Guerra was always underlined in red. The man in the admiral's hat hoped by this means to show his profound knowledge of the various relationships, as also the chivalrous view he took of his duties. But the two women passed few comments on these important events.

"He'll be thirsty and probably hungry too," said Maria Corleone, and ordered wine and a cold supper. Madda looked on and put the finishing touches to everything.

"Heaven knows what he will be like to me!" she observed.

When Guerra was announced, she lost her courage and vanished into the adjoining room. He came in with a pleasant smile on his face, though he looked somewhat nervous. He also seemed older. He had not seen the Princess since her visit to Livorno and proceeded to make such inquiries as politeness suggested. He spoke low in order to spare his voice, and put his hand to his throat as he did so. His manner made Maria Corleone feel uncomfortable, and she offered him refreshment. But he replied in a hoarse whisper that he did not

want anything to eat, though he was terribly thirsty. He drank greedily.

"You have succeeded at last!" Maria Corleone observed, venturing to refer to the events of the day. He looked feverishly into the glass.

"My God, Maria . . ." he said, without heeding what she had said, and evidently wishing to change the subject, "have you any news of my sister?"

"Madda's here now!" she replied almost aggressively. Guerra looked up.

"Here already! At Isola?"

She shook her head and pointed to the door of the adjoining room. All of a sudden she felt her heart beating wildly. Guerra sat still a moment with his eyes half closed, and then, with an unexpected laugh, he dashed into the next room.

"Since when," he cried cheerfully, "since when have you felt frightened of me, little sister?"

In the whole of that malicious and disingenuous sentence the last word stung most. "Little sister," which he had never used before, sounded infamous from his lips. Madda did not stir from the mantelpiece, against which she was leaning, and her eyes filled with tears. He seized her hands roughly and led her into the drawing-room.

"Is that the way you welcome me?" he blustered, kissing her on both cheeks. "People only creep into corners when they don't want to see anyone, or when they have a guilty conscience. Don't you want to see me, or have you a guilty conscience, Maddalena? Have you deceived your husband and must I reconcile you again? As Minister of War I have means at my disposal which even the *Capo* cannot help respecting. For instance, I have already promoted my old retainer Othello to the rank of sergeant-major. . . ."

Madda gazed at him with wide-open tortured eyes. He turned away, seized his glass, and drank with great feverish gulps.

"What thirst!" he continued in febrile tones; "my throat is

raw with shouting. And what have I not shouted today, *mesdames*. May God forgive me the dead for whom I made Him responsible!"

And he drank again. The two women gazed at each other like two mothers.

"Gasto!" said Madda tenderly, and stroked his hair.

"Yes, Madda *mia*," he replied in soft crapulous tones, still holding his glass. "Let me have a look at you — surely you have been ill!" But he did not look at her, he was not even thinking of her; he was staring into the glass, turning it about so that the red wine was tilted from side to side. "Rebellion . . ." he began softly, and his voice rose as he proceeded, "all my life, insurrections, insurrections! And now this year of 1848, which belongs to the people! — The outbreak of March! What is it all about? What is the good of it? Are those fellows going to sleep any more peacefully because they are drunk with thoughts of war? And it won't be merely a matter of sleep, but of death. . . . Good God, *mesdames*, that was a good bull in Arles! A little beast with cow's eyes, who did not want to have anything to do with men. But the arena was thirsting for blood and killed him in accordance with all the rules of the art. It took twenty-five minutes! I learnt all sorts of things from that; I was bursting with indignation. *Je protestais énergiquement* with a black-bearded beggar who had lost his legs — you know, a sort of centaur on four wheels instead of the usual two pins — and under the shadow of the decadent old Saint Trophimus, I talked myself into two excellent philosophies over the little beast, one for private and the other for demagogic use. Very well, Madda, today I am Minister of War, and tomorrow there will be war, bright, joyous, sacred war, with dead and wounded — magnificent, Madda! The whole crowd cheered, the fine young students are now practising marching in step, and polishing up their second-rate muskets, and rejoicing at the thought of death! — Magnificent, Madda! But where in my tragedy is the good bull of Arles? I cannot find him. . . ."

He stopped exhausted and put his hands to his eyes. When he tried to raise the glass to his lips again, it was so heavy that he could not lift it from the table. Looking up, he saw that Madda was holding it down with her hand.

"Let go of that glass!" he said softly, but with such bitter hostility that Madda, terrified, quickly withdrew her hand. And he drank again.

"What on earth has she come for?" he began again, gazing at Maria Corleone, who, still seated in her chair, was smiling sadly without stirring. "What do you think, Maria? What does she want here? She knows I do not need her help. She also knows that her day is done. Revolution does not require beds now; it requires graves!"

"You're drunk, Guerra," interposed Maria Corleone, trying to help her friend, who was standing behind him, biting her lips.

"No!" protested Guerra, gently but stubbornly. "I really feel sorry for her. Think of it, Maria, on the day of the revolution in Paris she looked for a weapon to shoot herself with and could not find one. In Paris on the 24th of February—and could not find one! And I felt so sorry for her that I wrote to you asking you to invite her."

"Aren't you going to stop soon, Gasto?" asked Madda patiently, and, turning to Maria Corleone, she apologized for him. "Don't misunderstand him, Maria," she said, "this is his way of keeping me at arm's length!"

"Now she is here," he said, interrupting her, "I don't pity her at all, and ask myself why she has come. For she cannot change herself, Maria. She ought to have remained in Paris—if only out of love!"

"Gasto!" cried Madda aloud, "I should have died if I had!"

"Yes," he said with a nod, and drank again.

"I'll go back there tomorrow," she declared. He laughed. "Gasto," she implored, "be kind to me! I had no evil idea in mind when I wanted to be near you. Times of unhappiness

and loneliness may come when you may perhaps be only too glad to have me!"

"Perhaps glad to have the compassionate sister," he replied, "but not to have you! One does not come to you when one is obliged to capitulate; for you will never capitulate, although it is about time you did." And he stopped and bit his lip. "It is time that the body did," he added softly, "and that is inexorable!"

"Great God!" she exclaimed, and suddenly felt an impulse to humiliate herself completely. "But I know that! I know exactly what I look like!"

"Yes," he said, with a nod, and, turning round, he stared at her. "You look very bad! Even for an unexacting swain like the fallen Caminer it will mean bitter disappointment. In fact, beneath it all, the most dreadful affront is offered for what the body has to give—ridicule!" Madda listened calmly, with raised eyebrows, and no longer in a mood to yield. He hardly paused. "Do you remember little Maria Pia! I have seen her."

Madda glanced at her friend with a smile that was neither pained nor humble, but rather self-conscious and even haughty. Then turning slowly round, she left the room. Guerra looked up at her straight girlish back and nodded as if in approval.

Maria Corleone wanted to follow her, but a carriage rattling over the bridge and apparently stopping at her house diverted her attention. She went over to the window.

"Do they know you are here?" she inquired. Guerra shook his head. "But perhaps they are looking for you," she added.

"No," replied Guerra, "we have had enough of each other for today."

"I almost thought the same," she said, and turned round. "Did Madda really think of committing suicide in Paris?" she inquired. Guerra shrugged his shoulders. "Do you think her capable of it, Gasto?"

"Do you?" he retorted.

"Yes," she replied unhesitatingly. "We might well feel anxious about her today."

He gazed in front of him quite unmoved. His eyes were a little glassy. She listened suspiciously to a sound she could hear on the stairs. Putting her head out of the door, she retreated in terror.

"Heavens!" she ejaculated. "I believe the Grand Duke is coming!"

Guerra laughed to himself.

"How frightened you are, Maria!" As if he were catching you *in flagranti*! Ha ha — is he still the same? . . . Bravo and my profoundest respects!"

Maria Corleone was embarrassed and uneasy.

"Madonna!" she exclaimed with a sigh. She would have liked to tear his dishevelled hair out. "You have been drinking heavily, Guerra. . . ."

"Only enough to keep up my spirits; for the conversation will either stick in the swamp of your resentment, or else it will turn on politics. The old comedian" (he uttered the word with extraordinary relish, mouthing the syllables as he allowed them slowly to escape his lips) — "the old comedian has played enough for today."

"Guerra," Maria Corleone pleaded nervously, keeping her eye on the door, "you are excited today and most aggressive. Please have some consideration for — for my position. . . ."

"Yes, yes," he said, with a nod; "so you still have your position, have you? — Ha ha! — It seems to be more permanent than his!"

"Guerra!" she begged.

"Besides, I am not aggressive, my dear; I am merely defending myself. This day has been most inconsiderate in its exposures, oh, yes — little Maria Pia is with child and he — I mean the fellow who is coming in now — is a hostile sort of chap; and as for myself — to the devil with myself! . . ."

There was a knock at the door. The footman did not announce anyone, but his respectful frightened expression proclaimed the importance of the guest he was ushering in.

"Forgive me, dear Princess," said the Grand Duke from the antechamber, "for coming at this unearthly hour."

Maria Corleone went out to meet him. The footman silently vanished. Guerra seemed amused, emptied his glass, and retired to the back of the room, which was badly lighted.

The Prince, regardless of her faint resistance and the embarrassed expression on her face, took hold of her arm affectionately.

"You're not angry with me, are you, *chérie*?" he asked as he led her along, obviously delighted to be with her. "You surely know all that has happened today? Splendid! Splendid! And so you will understand that sleep is out of the question. But I could not be alone any longer." They entered the drawing-room. The Prince gazed at her and misunderstood her warning gesture. "As you will readily understand, *cara mia*," he continued, "a Guerra Ministry is certainly not a soft pillow. . . ."

"Dear friend," Maria Corleone interrupted in anguish, "Signor Guerra is here."

Just at that moment the Prince caught sight of him and flushed with embarrassment. There was nothing he disliked more than to have witnesses to his more or less intimate scenes, his behaviour *en déshabillé*, so to speak, when he was talking privately to Maria Corleone.

"Fancy, Signor Guerra!" he cried with somewhat forced gaiety. "You were within an ace of playing the part of an involuntary eavesdropper!"

"Yes, indeed!" replied Guerra with a laugh. "And I would have given a good deal for the Princess's caution to have been postponed; for then one could have learnt in a few minutes what one had to deal with."

And he came forward. The Prince, who had already taken a seat, held out a hand to him.

"My dear sir," he observed, as he did so, "you treated me badly enough today! But, after all, I suppose you were right from your point of view, as the latest events have proved. So I

cannot help thinking that you know perfectly well what you have to do next, without feeling any serious anxiety regarding my personal sentiments — is that not so? ”

“Why is the fellow still laughing?” he thought as he spoke. Guerra was indecently cheerful. He revealed a wide expanse of teeth and winked his eye. “He is drunk,” thought Maria Corleone.

“Treated you badly?” Guerra repeated cheerily. “How fortunate it is, your Highness, that we should have met again and can discuss the value or worthlessness of words. Value or worthlessness!” And he rested his hands right and left on the table and looked with glassy eyes from the Prince to Maria Corleone. The Prince stared back in bewilderment. He had no idea what to make of Guerra’s words, which were certainly not appropriate. The Princess also became uneasy and smiled helplessly, as she had done all the evening, whenever Guerra turned to face her. “Have you any idea, dear lady, of the things that have been said today? Great and beautiful words! Let me refer only to these: ‘You wish to support me — you as a man?’ That was no mere rhetorical question, dear lady, it was the means of extorting a plain ‘Yea’ from my lips.”

The Grand Duke flushed and his under lids drooped. He pressed his fingers together desperately. — “If the fellow were to drop that cheerful expression,” he thought, “I should be inclined to take his words shamefully seriously.”

“What do you really mean, Signor Guerra?” he interposed uneasily. “I certainly deny that I had any intention of extorting anything from you with my question, as you suggest.”

“Naturally!” Guerra replied, with a hearty laugh, “naturally you deny it, your Highness! But you want to know what I mean. Listen, *Serenissimo*, and I will tell you. And it will sound quite new to your princely ears.”

And he grew grave. The sudden change in his fine face was so marked — almost a violent physical effort — that the Prince,

who had been sitting up straight and alert in his chair, sank back.

"I have to complain of your duplicity," said Guerra sternly; "— nay, I have to deplore your duplicity; for it will be tragic."

Maria Corleone felt as though she were being pricked all over by a thousand pins. Completely losing her self-possession, she shut her eyes to avoid witnessing the Prince's indignation, the renewed attack on the part of Guerra, who was by far the stronger of the two, and the violent altercation that was bound to follow, together with all its consequences for her as well. . . . But at last she looked up; for the Grand Duke was still silent. He sat, a narrow-chested and rather pitiful figure, in his arm-chair, which looked as if it had suddenly grown too large for him. With his head thrown back against the chair, he was gazing sadly up at the ceiling, allowing his eyes to wander over the richly gilded panels overhead. At that moment his demeanour had the appearance of cowardly, unmanly, schoolboyish evasion. But he had no desire either to make his escape or to lose his temper. "He wants to draw me over to his side, and he is doing it in a dare-devil cunning way," was the apparently irrelevant though penetrating thought that filled his mind. "Caminer alone knows how dangerous the man is; he draws one's very heart out." But when he felt the Princess's eyes upon him, he braced himself to reply.

"These are strong expressions, Signor Guerra," he said gently, "and I am unaccustomed to them and cannot stand them."

Guerra shook his head; he seemed depressed, as though he were confronted by a wall of misunderstanding.

"My God," he cried, turning to Maria Corleone, "we shall certainly not make much headway like this! If only you had not looked at the Prince, he would not have said he could not stand strong expressions. You force him to pose. — Yes," he added emphatically, just as the Grand Duke was about to protest, "you are clever, your Highness, and sensible, and only disingenuous to me. You regard disingenuousness as a

justifiable weapon in your Cabinet politics. But why do you dissemble only before me, of all people? Why do you send this lady, who had to protect your dignity from any kind of disturbance, to my house — or rather to my bed — in order to take petty precautions for your safety, and without troubling to consider what the Princess and I thought of such manœuvres? ”

The Grand Duke wriggled his head from side to side, as though his collar were too tight. — “He is catching me!” he thought in anguish. “He has an infernal way with him! And Maria does not dare to look at me, for fear of his damnable psychological insight. Has he really mastered us to that extent? ”

Maria Corleone did not take her eyes off Guerra’s face. “He really does not mean any harm,” she thought, and felt her old joy at being in his presence. “All he wants to do is to clear the air — reconciliation!” Guerra held her fast with his eyes.

“I was wondering, Signora,” he said in strident tones, and with a certain air of curiosity, “whether you would kindly tell us what you said about this manœuvre when you were at my house in Livorno? ”

The Grand Duke’s curiosity was also aroused, though his fears regarding her reply also disturbed him. “I wonder whether he is going to rob me of the woman a second time,” he asked himself; and suddenly remembered that it was in this very room that he had once before met her cruel decision in his rival’s favour. He pulled his side-whiskers and screwed up his eyes. “I sit here,” he thought bitterly, “like a poor criminal in the dock. . . .”

“I said,” Maria Corleone replied softly, “I confess that I did say it, and that Signor Guerra even reproached me for it — ”

“Don’t tell us what you said!” Guerra suddenly interposed, his brow flushed; “it was tactless of me to abuse your kindness as a witness without any justification.”

“Please tell us, Signora Maria,” the Grand Duke implored, with astonishing coolness; “I think I am beginning to see the point of this inquiry.”

Once again, as had happened during the afternoon in the Palazzo Pitti, Guerra seemed to betray slight weakness—undoubtedly a sympathetic weakness, the Prince reflected, a desire to avoid the final thrust and the collapse that must inevitably follow. So this fellow Guerra was not absolutely proof against wind and weather, dagger and shot. Moreover, he had feverish eyes; he seemed to feel matters deeply. He was not superior enough for a judge, perhaps not impartial enough either. But what about the Princess? Would she not be utterly confounded by his challenge?

Maria Corleone took his request seriously and regarded Guerra's objection as a mere matter of form. For the first time she found herself, standing between the two men, faced by a question of duty and a decision. The truth demanded by both of them was important; for even the Prince was on the point of seeing things clearly. It was imperative for the air to be cleared at all costs!

"I said," she replied firmly, "that the Grand Duke has lost his old sense of what was right and proper—or words to that effect."

Guerra lowered his eyes and waited for the result of her words. He did not wish to increase the Prince's humiliation by looking at him. The three were sitting at the large round table, a long way from one another, and the oppressive silence and their disinclination to move made each of them feel extraordinarily isolated. Suddenly the most unexpected and most irresistible movement possible was made. Maria Corleone and the Grand Duke quivered all over, as though they had been roused from their loneliness. Guerra had stretched his hand across the table, kindly, frankly, and ready to seize the Prince's!

"Do you think it will be possible, your Highness?" he inquired simply, with his captivating smile. The Prince's face went suddenly grey, and he stared vacantly and with an expression of profound alarm at the strange hand.

"Stop! Stop!" he cried softly, as though he were breathless after having run upstairs, "nothing would be gained from

your point of view, Signor Guerra, if I were simply to grasp your hand now, and say: 'Yes, it is possible!' For I do not believe you even know all the reasons for Maria's remark." (He said "Maria's remark," so deeply was he moved.) "For, as a matter of fact, a few days before that I had asked Austria, without the knowledge of my Cabinet, to send me a brigade to march on Livorno."

But Guerra did not withdraw his hand, and there was no change in his face, which now resembled a mask.

"Will it be possible for us to work together?" he asked again.

The Grand Duke removed both his hands from the table.

"Last month, Signor Guerra," he said, almost as though he were making a report, "it was only on account of the refusal of a secret agent that the plan contrived by me for an attempt on your —"

Maria Corleone, her face distraught, was looking on aghast. The Grand Duke noticed her almost insane expression and stopped in anguish.

"Oh, don't talk about that, your Highness," Guerra interrupted, with a smile; "I am, so to speak, a specialist in abortive assassinations — as you must surely know! Let us regard it as the compensating finger of fate!"

He had not moved his hand!

The Grand Duke, his features distorted, brought his two fists down on the table, right and left of Guerra's hand.

"Why do you make me appear so pitiable both to myself and to this woman?" he cried. "Do you know what I have been thinking about all this time here, throughout this tormenting interview — like a fool, I let the thought turn in my mind almost rhythmically — and the measure was stronger than all the efforts of your conscience. — Well, I said to myself: 'He is catching me. . . .'" And he sprang to his feet, crying out under the stinging lash of his nerves: "He is catching me! He is catching me!"

Guerra also stood up, but said nothing; his eyes were so sad

that Maria Corleone began to cry. Guerra went up to her, and, lo, he took her head between his hands and kissed her on the mouth.

"Good woman!" he said, and walked over to the door. The Grand Duke was still leaning over the table, supporting himself on his trembling arms; his head was shaking too.

"*Chérie*," he said in a faint voice, "he is catching us — each of us by our own peculiar weakness."

He even laughed a plaintive, tearful laugh.

* * * * *

Renzo Maddii was standing on the bridge, where it descends into the Via Tornabuoni. Although he had pulled up his collar, Guerra recognized him and went up to him.

"What is it you want of me, Renzo, my dear friend?"

"Why do you call me dear friend, Signor Guerra?"

"Because, my boy, I also call Maria Pia my dear friend."

"But I absolutely forbid you to do that, Signor Guerra!"

"Well, what is it you want of me, you donkey?"

"Be careful, Signor Guerra! You have already escaped from me once today."

"And must I do so again, little Renzo? Are you not afraid that I might win you round? They say I have a knack of winning people. If I really wanted to, I could make you fall on my neck in five minutes!"

"I hardly think so," replied Renzo, taking an embarrassed step to the rear. "It is about Maria Pia."

"Of course, my boy, and I am no longer interested in you."

"Have you spoken to her today, Signor Guerra? She declares that she only saw you."

Guerra seized Renzo's thin arm with his strong hands as in a vice.

"And is that why you have been running after me all night, Renzo? Is that why you have been tormenting her?"

"I don't allow myself to be made unhappy," said Renzo,

concealing the pain he was suffering. "You must solemnly promise me. . . ."

"Unhappy?" exclaimed Guerra, laughing softly. "Solemnly?" Then suddenly he added: "Maria Pia is six months gone, isn't she?"

"How — how on earth! — She must have told you!"

Guerra shook him furiously.

"No, she did not tell me, Renzo. I have not spoken to her. But if Guerra were to fling you into the Arno now, there is not a cock in Christendom that would dare to crow three times."

"Let go of me!" groaned Maddii, "and tell me how you know."

"You were at my house in Livorno in September, Renzo, and I can count up to six, Renzo, surely! And there is nothing more vile on earth and no more villainous blasphemy of Almighty God, by whom in the old days you laid some store — there is nothing more inhuman, Renzo, than to procreate a human being only with the object of destroying the shape of a human figure!"

Whereupon, plunging his hand quickly and unexpectedly into Renzo's overcoat pocket, he withdrew a pistol.

"And this into the bargain, Renzo!" he said sadly. "Of course, into the bargain!"

Maddii uttered a hoarse cry and, tearing himself away, ran madly across the bridge in the direction of the Via Maggio. Guerra put the weapon into his own pocket, turned round, and raised his head. There were still lights in the red drawing-room. He walked along the river-bank to his hotel; his legs were a little shaky under him. The lamps danced before his eyes as they had done before through the rattling carriage windows; they even seemed to him to jingle as they danced.

GOD'S COMRADE

I

SUDDENLY the Age seemed to separate into two halves as though the year, after the headlong resolute course of its early months, were yielding to the inexorable law of action and reaction, or giving in to its human obstacles and falling asunder like all living things, through the great uncertainty with which the future is approached and towards which life gropes. The great impetus of ideas, which up to that moment had swept everybody along, was, as it were, stopped short by the extraordinary confusion or the quite ordinary workings of men's minds, as well as by the mechanical brakes applied by every conceivable accident arising from daily events. Mankind had caught up the Age, and the wedge which, in the form of a powerful and magnificent idea, had been driven into the century was, after the manner of all things human, split up into infinitesimal parts, each one of which was perishable. The Age had ceased to lead, with the inevitable result when people, animated only by hope and fear regarding a wholly uncertain future, struggle for an ephemeral end with the luck or ill luck of the soldier, or the skill or lack of skill of the diplomat. The contrariness of the Age manifested itself with startling rapidity—the National Army, which was meeting with heavy losses before the triangle of fortresses at Verona, had suddenly ceased to attack and was experiencing great difficulty in defending itself against the Marshal of iron nerve and coolness. Rome was on the verge of revolution because Pio Nono, too priestly and intelligent to make war on behalf of the Austrian Catholics, had disavowed the volunteers of the Papal States, who were fighting in the valley of the Po. In Naples the firing of the King's Swiss troops had completely cleared the Via

Toledo of the new barricades and their defenders, and the reaction had set in, while the Neapolitan troops fighting with the National Army had been recalled from the northern front. Hardly had its realization been attempted, when the National Ideal fell asunder, before its supporters had even mustered, far less united.

In Guerra the energy of the Age broke up into fragments even earlier, on the very day of his public triumph, and was completely dissipated on the night of the Proclamation. This really meant that he, the politician, had broken up; the remarkable accuracy of his sense of time had vanished, and the façade of his life was pierced and perforated in many places. At first he imagined that, as a man no longer supported by the Age and his mission, he would collapse, that his degradation to a politician with increasingly doubtful chances of success would necessarily end in his corruption as a human being, and that the squandering of a too lengthy and exacting life service for a Cause which had become discredited, possibly pointless, and, in any case, dubious, must lead to spiritual bankruptcy. But he very soon became aware that nothing of the kind was happening. The despair which had filled him on the night of the Proclamation had been the touchstone for his powers of endurance. The man in him would succeed in surviving his separation from history and in drinking the undiluted and dramatic cup of disappointment to the dregs. Consequently he felt by no means resigned, but was filled with a new courage and desire to remain in the public eye, active and steadfast up to the last stand, like one completely isolated. He knew that he would never be allowed to leave the arena.

He summed up the position. He knew that Menozzi's Livornese Guards, whom he had ordered to be disbanded after they refused to go to war, had returned to Livorno and still existed as a secret party. He knew that the capital and the country had been denuded of troops and of most of its police. He knew that the *Capo*, more resilient than himself, was providing for the possibility of an Austrian victory by sowing the

seeds of the most virulent and anarchical form of Radicalism, with the object of infecting the hardly convalescent monarchy with the most dreaded of all bacilli and thus keeping the trouble simmering. He was also aware that he could no longer play a part in this, that he would never again descend into the underworld of politics and start afresh. He knew that Caminer, now merely a private individual and a friend of the Grand Duke, was seized with a mysterious lust for travel and that he had all manner of vague designs and sinister affairs in hand—that the Grand Duke himself, who ever since that Proclamation night had made Guerra an ally, had become strangely uneasy and unhappy in his attitude towards him and was doing all in his power to see as little of him as possible, and read the London and Vienna papers with greater interest than the utterly untrustworthy Florentine rags. He knew that Maria Corleone and Madda, who had retired to Isola, more out of fear of him than from any qualms of a personal or political nature, avoided meeting him. He knew he was in a terrible plight, and that the millstones all around were slowly closing in upon him.

His face was still calm, almost cheerful. And if he were sad, nobody noticed it. At such moments he would be thinking of Maria Pia and wondering how he could help her, since her fate seemed to be so irrevocably entwined in his. But this was a problem he could not solve. Renzo remained invisible, as did also his wife, and the idea of calling in the help of the police to discover where they lived was distasteful to him. It was clearly part of his piteous plight that he should be isolated from the only women for whom he happened to care. But Maria Pia alone caused him any sadness. Otherwise he was calm, almost cheerful. The altered tenor of his life seemed to him neither undignified nor unmanly, and he gradually perceived that the long, varied, and ultimately stern preparation for his fate had proved of no avail and had even been cleverly heading for this consummation all the while.

The one human acquisition he had made in these perilous times—in so far as it was not true that he was still able, indeed more than ever able, to win people to him, even those who avoided him—the one human acquisition was the blind Prime Minister. Guerra loved him. Since his chastening by Fate the limpid, intangible distance of this man was a blessing to him, in a very different way from what it had been to Caminer, with his tragic strivings after purity. Guerra too saw in the blind man a degree of human dignity which he could neither attain nor attempt to emulate. But this same dignity, which through either sensitiveness or aversion shut itself off from Caminer, responded to him and perhaps loved him in return. Between the old and the middle-aged man there arose that mystical silent comradeship of people going the same way—not walking side by side, but going one ahead of the other.

One day Guerra entered the blind Minister's cabinet bearing a telegram to the effect that in the terrible defeat of May the Tuscan troops had been decimated. He read it aloud to him without preamble. The Prime Minister looked up. So great was the peace of his darkened existence that the skin of his narrow beardless face was still smooth; although he was over sixty, it had hardly a line or a crease in it; the serenity of his brow was perfect, and his thick hair was so beautiful a white that it suggested some pristine colour suited to his strangely pallid face rather than a sign of age.

"No panic," said Guerra; "they fought like heroes and are beating an orderly retreat on Brescia."

"Heroes, heroes!" the blind man repeated, and raised his hand slightly towards Guerra. "Poor heroes! And are you going to report this baldly to the Grand Duke?"

"Certainly, for I need hardly fear that he will not be able to bear it."

"He will hand on the news unvarnished to Caminer, if he hasn't already heard it."

Guerra shrugged his shoulders and smiled calmly. The blind

man leant across the table towards him as though he were searching for something in his face.

"I am very glad, Signor Guerra, that, while you do not deceive yourself and are in no way disturbed, you seem to be prepared for anything."

"For anything!"

The blind man nodded as though he were pleased to have his belief confirmed.

"You probably think that if the worst comes to the worst, you will be Dictator," he observed unexpectedly. Guerra looked at him in astonishment.

"What do you mean by the worst?" he inquired.

"Not the downfall of the Grand Duke, but the attempt to establish anarchy, which would be inevitable."

"But you surely know, Marchese, that, in the event of a military defeat, that will be the slogan of the Radical Opposition?"

"I did not know it; but I can well imagine it."

Guerra raised his voice excitedly.

"Do you know that my dictatorship could be a success only if it were supported by the Radicals?"

"Of course I know it, Signor Guerra!" the blind man replied in his kind refined voice. "But I have the feeling that you no longer care about any success which will cost the lives of men. I am ready to believe that, in this respect, you are already suffering from the fact that your life has been successful enough."

Guerra leant back. — "Suffering?" he asked himself. The people his life had cost had given him food for reflection rather than cause for suffering. During those years on Elba, and even later, he had ever and again distilled his drop of profit from the fate of all with whom he came in contact, even out of the bull and the decadent saint of Arles. And, to be exact, that was much more a matter of profit than of suffering. And suddenly thinking of the murderer Juan, he reflected that, but for him, the man would probably never have committed murder; he

would have remained a smuggler or a *souteneur*. Even this, however, did not oppress him. And when he thought of his sister and could visualize no happy ending to her ruined life, no voice within him hinted at any modification of his harsh attitude towards her, nor did he feel any pain at all commensurate with the suffering involved. And what about himself? Was he progressing along his new, not undignified, and by no means uncourageous path with any dread of pain, either for himself or for others? Why, if it were ever necessary, he would be able to fire a bullet through Menozzi's head; if it were ever necessary, he would drive the murderer Juan a second time into the water. He would not save his skin by means of evangelical phrases. But yes! But yes! There was a form of suffering which oppressed him and drove him along a definite path into the fatal future. Was it the suffering of the masses? Was it that? Did he refuse to soak the arena with further torrents of blood? Had not his old life been ruined and his Cause with it, from the moment he forced the arena to fight—or, to put it plainly, to become the wretched bull?

For a long time he said nothing, and the blind man did not break the silence. He looked as though he were asleep and would wait patiently for all eternity.

"My God," said Guerra softly, and the blind man's eyebrows began to twitch, "my God, I should have to dispatch myself into nothingness at once if anything were to be achieved without the sacrifice of men's lives. And even then it would be necessary to sacrifice somebody or other."

"Somebody or other?" the blind man repeated as though from another sphere; "it would be a matter of somebody or other, not of the masses who are swallowed up every moment. It would work if it were right; but it is wrong, and you know it. If you were to take your life today—let us suppose you did—we should have civil war tomorrow, in the rear of the army. Your death now would cost more lives in a single week than your whole life has done hitherto. You know it and that is why you do not desert. You also know why you will not

set up a Radical dictatorship — out of the same diffidence about squandering life, beautiful life." And the blind man leant his head a little to one side as a man does when he steps back to contemplate a work of art; then, with a smile full of magnificent insight, and his face once more unearthly in its stillness, he added: "Beautiful life!"

"Do you imagine then," inquired Guerra, carried away by his companion's words, "do you imagine, my dear friend, that I do not love life? Do you imagine that I am not afraid of death?"

The blind man nodded slowly, his hand moving in harmony. He was still smiling.

"I believe you do," he replied, "for even I love life, although my eyes at least know more about death than your worst nightmares wot of. But I also know all manner of things about life, not much less than you people who can see. I know that the beauty of life is greater than the beauty of death, which is beautiful enough. I have a very vivid conception of human beauty, or of the beauty of youth, which amounts almost to the same thing; for the fact that one has beautiful life before one, makes one beautiful. The fine young men whom we refrained from telling that war was a calamity, a monstrous distortion, a blasphemous coupling of life and death, and whom we decked out as though they were going to a banquet — these young students, artists, and working-men, who will rescue both themselves and our Cause from the war, must not fall in street-fighting here. That is the great purpose of your dictatorship, Guerra — it is so great that it makes the fear of death meaningless."

"I know what you mean," replied Guerra simply. "Such things are worth the sacrifice of the individual. I believe I shall be able to grasp it and make it my idea. Then the risking of men's lives will not seem so terrible to me." And he smiled. "The training my life has given me has braced me, so to speak, for only one special kind of heroism."

"That is the idea!" exclaimed the blind man emphatically;

"and if you like, I will remain at my post whatever happens — remain at your side, I mean. Then at least we shall be two, and both of us love life; so perhaps one of us, at all events, will remain alive. I should like it to be you. But naturally you will be the more exposed of the two. For, after all, you are not blind. Sometimes I feel that I am so blind that even the people about me cannot see me."

* * * * *

The Grand Duke stood at the open window and read the telegram. Behind him the Boboli Gardens rose tier upon tier of symmetry and peace into the glorious May day. The orderly and carefully kept shrubberies, beds, ornamental trees, and statues harmonized well with the bright sunlight.

"Sad, very sad news," he observed, without turning to look at Guerra. "But it is only a partial defeat. After all, only the right wing of the National Army has been routed — that will not decide the campaign."

"What will you do," Guerra immediately inquired, "if a decisive defeat should follow?"

The Grand Duke raised his soft chin from his tie and cast a fleeting glance over his shoulder, as though the sun at his back were disturbing him.

"What I conceive to be my duty, of course," he replied, with half-closed eyes. It was an insidious formal reply.

"Do you know," Guerra inquired more sharply, drawing a step nearer, for owing to the brightness of the background he could not see the Prince's face clearly, "do you know how I can smash the bridges in your rear? By telling everybody about your candidature for the national Throne. As an aspiration it is an anachronism now, as you will yourself admit, but as a piece of news for the public it will still be interesting and effective enough."

"I have long ago given up all thought of that," the Prince replied gently. "But of course you could do it. It goes without saying that in that case Austria would abandon me altogether."

There was something in this reply, an almost ingenuous acquiescence in the menacing object of the inquisition, which irritated Guerra. Drawing close to the Prince, he observed that his face was more agitated than the words he had just uttered.

"God in heaven!" he exclaimed, dumbfounded. "You actually acknowledge that you may be disloyal! Your Highness, with two fingers I can strip you of your sovereign's robes and realize the only value which you still possess for the country—your value as a hostage. Do you wish to force me to seize you and proceed to methods of extortion which, on my honour, I had not contemplated?"

And he drew back in horror; the head before his eyes nodded, and now it muttered:

"Yes, Guerra!"

Behind him, above the gardens and the hills, the sky glowed with such a deep azure that it looked as though it wished to act as a kindly mediator between the black of the nocturnal cypresses and the frenzied fire of the sun. Guerra looked over the Prince's shoulder to the landscape, which, far removed from mankind, was concerned only about itself. And he saw that even the neat, artificial-looking box-wood hedges, the laurel-trees clipped round or square by human gardeners, and the very demigods carved in white stone had forgotten the human chisel and with wild passion had joined the grand and reckless play of lovely mother earth with the benevolent blue sky. Guerra's words were inspired by a profound thought, but what he said sounded senseless and as though it referred to nobody.

"I love life!"

The Prince raised his hand to the back of his head, which was being scorched by the sun. But he did not turn round, nor did he step into the shade.

"Yes, Guerra," he continued, "the other day you put me into the confessional, and I cannot get out of it. Yes, I will obey the voice of the Age if it is kind to me again. I will break

promises, rescind proclamations, tear up treaties, care not a straw for the curses of the dupes! I will avail myself of the powers that offer themselves in order to reinstate the beloved old régime! But I shall find it difficult, at all events for the moment, possibly because everything is still doubtful, or because I am weakened by the Age, or by you; possibly because I am bewitched by you. 'Pon my soul, I shall find it difficult on your account, because it will mean the death of you! Caminer seldom makes a mistake!"

Guerra was still looking over the Prince's shoulder at the lovely world beyond. Even the plain frowning structure of the Fortezza di Belvedere, standing high up on the left, seemed to be joining in the general festival and to be raising its head calmly, merely as a target for the sun. Suddenly the Prince's arm reached out from his shoulder and blotted out the landscape.

"I hope," said Guerra, gazing into his face, "that you are not counting on my softer moods."

"No!" exclaimed the Prince, still holding up his arm. "No, I am counting on your hardness. Hold me fast as long as you are strong and I am weak." And he let his arm drop, as though there were no longer any danger that the landscape might distract Guerra's attention. "Even Caminer has his peculiar weaknesses," he added suddenly. "And you know it."

Guerra frowned.

"You know that I shall proclaim a republic if you desert," he replied sharply.

The Grand Duke shook his head gently.

"What is the good of your Republic if I desert? It will last only until I return, and then it will cost many lives."

Guerra was stirred; a vicious circle had closed. He felt the Prince's hand on his arm.

"I promise you, Guerra, not to leave secretly. You will have the opportunity of arresting me."

"Good!"

"Will you also make public my claims to the National Throne?"

"I think not," Guerra rejoined. "I should not like to make you look ridiculous."

The Grand Duke tried to reply, to utter a word of thanks rather than a protest; for his face was suffused with joy. But he suddenly turned round and gazed out of the window at the magic garden. Once more Guerra looked over his shoulder. The beautiful world was built up with a strange and ruthless certainty and unparalleled pride. Strange to say, the two insignificant mortals shook their heads simultaneously.

2

In spite of all his eagerness, his strenuous journeys to and fro, from Florence to Rome and another mysterious place, where he held tortuous discussions with a certain Austrian diplomat, and in spite of many other preoccupations and qualms, Pompeo Caminer, now a busy private citizen and the friend of the Grand Duke, gave his sharp wits a whole week to reflect upon an invitation from Princess Corleone to visit her at her summer residence for an interview which had become necessary. When at last he came to the conclusion that he would in any case be better advised to avoid Madda Guerra rather than the harmless and sorrowful Princess, he had already long been aware that his cogitations had served no other purpose than to stimulate and strengthen his overpowering longing, and that he would certainly have repaired to Isola — indeed, that some time or other, when the temptation proved too great, he would have found his way there — even without an invitation. In the first place, he had received the *Capo's* shamelessly obscene and by no means anonymous letter. His correspondent, though far from being a faithful husband, nevertheless betrayed such deep suffering behind his brutal and malicious baudiness and his madly insolent monologue on the art of love and politics that Caminer found it impossible

to feel either indignation or amusement. He thought over the matter seriously, and in the end, as though a vestige of the blasphemer's poison had remained in him, he felt his longing increase instead of diminish. And on the spur of the moment, while still in a state of elation, he had written a mad letter to Madda, in which he had thrown all restraint and caution to the winds. This had happened on the eve of the day on which he had appealed to the Grand Duke to protect him against his passion—the day on which Guerra had marched into Florence. He had found the letter in the pocket of his overcoat on the following day, and, with a shake of his head, had read it and torn it up. Time proceeded on its violent way, and he became wholly absorbed by his important secret mission, by means of which, since it imposed the weightiest reasons for reserve, he hoped he might either forget the woman or keep her at arm's length. But before long he perceived that in pretending to cherish this hope he had been deceiving himself—he really dreaded its realization. Finally he came to the conclusion that in this respect he had nothing to fear. In his soul, which was anything but simple, brutality and tenderness, hatred and love, pity and pleasure at the sight of pain, the need for purity and revenge, remained tragically disconnected. His struggle to ruin Guerra was affected neither by his attachment to the man nor by his passion for the sister. His political mission was professional—a thing apart, a passion apart. That other object, the longing of his unhappy heart, he had no wish to resist, even if it brought him nothing but pain. So far removed from happiness was the simplicity of his passion that pain had the astonishing virtue of not being the opposite of happiness. Happiness could no longer be quite strange to his heart, since he was well acquainted with pain and had learnt to know it better with every day that was added to his life. The eternal aversion of the world, thanks to this Camineresque law of contraries, could not help one day revealing itself as inner sympathy, and thus leading to a great reconciliation. But what

if that other private passion were to venture to interfere with or actually to prejudice his important professional activities, as there was no doubt it had been doing for some time in Madda's case? The invitation came and Caminer capitulated. But that was not all! Remembering his agreement with the Grand Duke, he went to him and showed him Maria Corleone's letter. The fact that the Prince, with a suspicious air of taking it as a matter of course, immediately implied that Maria Corleone's wish was perfectly legitimate and that he would be quite right to accept her invitation made him postpone the visit for a couple of days. After a night that almost ended in violence—Monsieur Doney, the proprietor of the famous restaurant in the Via Tornabuoni was ultimately forced, with all due respect, to wrench the champagne bottles from the hand of his distinguished guest, just as he was on the point of throwing them at the Venetian mirrors in a private room—he set off in the direction of the northern hills.

He was excited and happy and took a sort of perverse pleasure in the inevitable criticism of his reason, which told him that his situation was foolish and not altogether devoid of danger. His heart, stimulated by the night's excesses, beat so violently that it kept him busy. As his fast brougham sped up the winding road to Majano, he pressed his hands to his breast, his mouth fell open, and his breath came so short and fast that it was almost a snort, as though he had been running uphill behind the vehicle. His palpitating heart, however, caused him no discomfort; it merely whipped up his blood into a rollicking rhythm, and to anyone who had not lost all understanding of the madly irregular eager beats of this old heart, more than rollicking fun was evident; there was humour in the singularity of this moment of his life. After the gallop came an ironic calm, almost a sneaking cringing movement, and then a trot, followed by the highest good spirits. After all, it was about fifteen years since he had seen the woman whom he knew only too well he loved, and whom he had possessed

only in thought. This exaggerated exploitation and extension of that fragment of the past in which she had been physically his avenged itself in the course of time, not through a diminution of his powers of memory, but through a mystic magnification and fatal mastery of the lady whom he had loved and lost and who ended by haunting him like a lascivious succubus. She always appeared to him as she had been in that terrible provocative and painful last scene, as though it were her permanent rôle—the scene on the night before she left him, the night when he first heard about her going, that unmentionable, never-to-be-forgotten, and indescribable Satan's night of the last opportunity, of her last offering of herself, of the terrible physical impotency of his break-down, followed by his sobs—yes, his sobs, and her hard horrified face and her “No!”—That had been the reality. His dreams—the first had been a nightmare consisting in an accurate repetition of that night—had gradually allowed of variations which were none the less cruel; the succubus still continued to lash the whip of her eternal departure; and then he would be filled with a gnawing submissiveness from which anything could be extorted.

Caminer laughed softly when he felt his heart galloping again. If the joyful look of the eyes at meeting again which would be the result of such an absurd expenditure of physical energy led to nothing more than to the exorcizing of his plaguy phantom, it would be sufficient reward. Even the pulse of the landscape, which was usually so peaceful, seemed to him to be beating faster. As a rule, he paid scant attention to nature, for which, like the majority of his fellow-countrymen, he had but little feeling. Yet, in the almost drunken impetus of this ascent to Majano, even this was changed. The walls white with dust, right and left, sped by faster than usual, and along their tops the treacherous pieces of glass which would cut to pieces the hands of any unauthorized visitors glittered with unwonted brilliance, like precious stones, and lit up the walls as they flashed past with a beautiful and apparently

luxurious radiance. The olive-trees seemed to move more slowly, but they too, stirred by a faint breeze, light-heartedly changed their hue from green to silver. For the first time he perceived that the hills in front, which seemed to be hurrying towards him, with unaccustomed speed, were like the waves of a giant waterfall, gushing from the dark and lofty mountains in the background. As through half-closed eyes he cast a swift glance round the amphitheatre from San Francesco to Fiesole, as far as the truculent self-confident group of hills of the Torre del Gallo, beyond the invisible Arno, he seemed to see the waves rise and fall with a lavish display of colour ranging from green, dark-green and gold-green, to silver. The world seemed to be tossing in a glorious fever of excitement and beauty. And when he turned his head quickly to the rear, towards the town lying infinitely small in the valley, he saw not only a blaze of mighty diamonds in every window, glass roof, and metal spire, but also the dome of the Cathedral, quivering in a warm haze of pearly grey. And he was forced to laugh as with mingled feelings of satisfaction and uneasiness he recognized the unusual mood of the world about him. And although he would have been the last to deny that the faintly morbid magic about him might possibly have been the creation of his own mood and of his galloping heart, it nevertheless remained sufficiently astonishing, intensely moving, and wonderfully helpful in shortening the journey. The coachman, whose curiosity had already been roughly though good-humouredly repressed, no longer turned round at either a laugh, a muttered sentence, or even a terrifying snort from his master. For the ex-Minister's servants were convinced that the stern and awe-inspiring Barbarossa was going to the Devil—it was merely a question of time—not because he was a tyrant, a stern taskmaster, or even congenitally wicked, but because, for that very reason, he seemed to be possessed.

The carriage passed the forbidding walls of the monastery of Majano, turned sharp to the right, and as the immemorial

oaks of the magnificent estates with a grand gesture blotted out the heroic view, as if by right, the landscape became shadier and softer. The quiet long-suffering walls of the park of Isola now came into view. The sun hung almost modestly between the massive peaceful trees, submitting to be cut, slashed, speckled, and chequered by their shadows. Presently the stately gateway appeared, surmounted by stone lions holding shields, and with the hypothetical crown in bronze above the huge wrought-iron gates. The avenue of cypresses leading up to the house cut its white flint way at a slight incline through the park wall and revealed the great white, simple, flat-roofed, high-windowed summer palace in imposing and fairy-like majesty on the high ground beyond. "To what extent," Caminer asked himself, at once amused and short of breath with excitement, "to what extent am I once more the author of this fantastically beautiful vision of a dazzling white house, suspended, as it were, in mid-air, beneath a maddeningly azure sky, and framed by cypress walls of a bewildering black?" How did this apparently lofty and romantic sense of colour come to Caminer—Pompeo, Baron, Knight, Criminologist, and Asthmatic? Ha ha! he himself was surely too highly coloured, eh?—too unfortunately, or shall we say repulsively, coloured to have the slightest interest in such things? Possibly it was his own complicated and infernally humorous imperfect blood-pump—not an altogether blameless heart, therefore—that warmed up the universe in so diverting a manner and set it dancing. . . .

And he gave a careless laugh. The coachman raised his eyebrows apologetically as a somewhat disconcerted footman opened the door of the carriage. Caminer had not been able to announce his sudden visit and was not expected at that moment. The old butler was uncertain whether he should inform the powerful and not quite sober gentleman of this fact. He conducted him to the drawing-room, satisfied himself that his Excellency could stand and walk steadily without staggering, and, concluding that his somewhat coarse hilarity on his ar-

rival, which nobody in Isola had witnessed, must have been due to his excellent spirits, hurried away to the Princess.

Caminer made no attempt to accustom himself to the subdued light of the room, which was carefully shielded from the sunlight, for today he took an extraordinary if somewhat dubious delight in brightness, landscape, colour, and everything else that had chanced to catch his eyes on his memorable journey. He could not endure the semi-darkness; his joyful heart could see no fun in it and showed signs of feeling cross and oppressed. So he promptly threw open the shutters of two of the windows. The sun poured in two broad streams into the room, and Caminer, who was familiar with its effects, tried in his wanton spirit of discovery to test Madda's abnormal pulse from the decorations of the room, as he put it. The rooms in which she lived could not well be more firmly and coolly imprinted on his eyes than the landscape of a moment ago. That, it might be maintained, would have been a blasphemy for his heart. But the dignified Florentine furniture of the late Renaissance period, with its simple lines, stood massively firm and grave about him, not joining in the joke. He was standing in front of a valuable writing-desk, the upper half of which consisted of a number of small, medium, and large drawers of beautiful tarsia work, while in small dark round niches stood wooden statuettes of a deep-brown colour with cracked, blurred features. The desk was locked and had apparently not been used for generations; but it was perfectly self-possessed, though somewhat forbidding. Even the serene and noble Tuscan sideboard, the haughty throne-like *cassapanca*, and the uncomfortable chairs and stools were wrapped up in themselves, indifferent and cold-blooded, as he irritably put it. He soon ceased to examine the other objects about him, feeling that he had been strangely wounded and suddenly becoming conscious of acute fears lest his great, beautiful, and, so to speak, costly joy, which had already proved so strangely delirious or fantastic, should end, not in fulfilment, but in a bewildering and paralysing awakening and the old familiar

disillusionment, which was the gloomy twin of his own unwanted existence. Strange to say, even this black thought, like the discoveries and magic experiences of a moment ago, was absorbed by his heart and hurled along his blood-stream. A mere accident might now destroy all his calculations—Madda need not necessarily be at Isola; on this fine day she might be hiding somewhere in the bewildering landscape, lost as in a maze.—No matter! He determined to wait for her, either there or in Settignano, close by. But there was another possibility! Utterly hostile to his joy and, as he was almost tempted to say, to the complaisant mood of that day, from pure loathing she might have no wish to see him, she might send word to say that she was not at home, and refuse to show herself. . . .

Inclined to be violent, Caminer was on the point of leaving the depressing room to find his way to the ladies himself, when Maria Corleone entered. They came face to face in the doorway; in fact, they opened the door together, he from the inside, she from the outside. Being the stronger and more excited of the two, he pulled her into the room by the door, so that she suddenly stood close up to him. With raised eyebrows and a haughty look from between her half-closed lids she showed her disapproval of his boorish impatience. Indeed, Maria Corleone had been dreading the painful duty which Madda, the woman who would not capitulate, had imposed upon herself and which she was now called upon suddenly and unexpectedly to fulfil. But, through this strange though far from pleasant accident, the Princess quickly recovered command of her old weapon—the social superiority and reserve of manner and bearing which the stalwart victor before her totally lacked. Without retreating, she leant to one side in order to avoid him. She also seemed to be holding her breath, to escape the odour of his hirsute over-heated body. Humbled and abashed, Caminer stepped back, confused to the point of physical pain, rendered wretched and helpless by a sort of sudden undignified sluggishness and timidity of heart—infidelity of heart, was the thought that flashed through his ruddy head. Maria Corleone

passed him without saying a word, her head still thrown back, and with unexpected mastery controlling her shocked feelings. She glanced at the two broad beams of sunlight pouring into the room, with the same look of disapproval as she had bestowed on her rude visitor, and closed the shutters almost completely. Once more the room was in shadow, and through this emphasizing of its twilight calm and unruffled dignity, from being depressing it became frankly hostile. The Princess, who was barely visible and whose composure was consequently complete, sat down with such consummate ease and majestic right on the throne-like *cassapanca* that the ruddy man felt like an outsider of doubtful lineage and respectability; and, overcome by a sense of his miserable solitude, he was filled with his old class-hatred. For, to make matters worse, she invited him to be seated on one of the uncomfortable spindle-legged stools, on which it was impossible to sit upright and which always made their occupants feel they were in the presence of their superiors and conquered from the beginning. Nevertheless, he obeyed, if only for the simple reason that he had suddenly become conscious of feeling exceedingly tired.

The Princess then addressed him in the most formal language, thanking him for having come, and not even troubling to make any introductory remarks before formulating the somewhat insidious request she had to make. She told him she had been alarmed, not only by the bad news from the front, but also by certain vague rumours that the Grand Duke was engaged in secret negotiations with the enemy, behind the back of his army and his Government, and she begged Caminer, the only man who was in a position to tell her the truth and calm her fears, to deny these rumours. She explained that she had emphasized "the only man" because the Grand Duke himself, whom she very seldom saw and whom she did not wish to trouble with these depressing matters, was probably much less competent than Caminer to give her information.

It was only the speed with which she had plunged into politics that took Caminer by surprise, and not her desire for

information, which he had been more or less prepared to find at Isola. The professional side of him had remained unaffected by this strange, bright, and exciting day, and just as Maria Corleone had recourse to her aristocratic breeding, so Caminer was now presented with a favourable opportunity of wielding his professional dialectic like a knife. In his own plebeian way he might, with perfect ease and grace, have dealt deadly blows to all the refinement with which he was surrounded, as he had done hundreds of times before. But he refrained. He was not in a mood for politics and was also anxious not to wound the Princess, if only because she was sheltering Madda. Yes, he was still faint-hearted and tired, his strategy was timorous, and he was anxious to behave with all due humility to avoid meeting with a rebuff. For had it not cost him a terrible and almost cosmic expenditure of life force to climb the hills to see Madda? All political discussion must therefore be avoided.

He was conscious of a perfectly distinct fear in his breast, and his heart was now beating too faintly; his wretched body, reacting as though his heart were beating too fast, forced him to open his mouth to relieve his shortness of breath. He was well aware that, seated on his low stool, with his shoulders rounded, his back curved, his heavy hands hanging boorishly between his legs, and his mouth open, he must present an extremely ugly, not to say repulsive, spectacle. And, bending his head, he became lost in thought, forgetting his hostess, her question, and his answer.

"Signor Caminer!" the Princess reminded him after a while. Her tone was anxious rather than unkind. He looked up, and blinked his red lids in embarrassment. Then he remembered the forgotten question. Politically Maria Corleone was now, of course, a woman of no importance, but in that house she was the mistress, and the only means of access to Madda. She must be humoured and induced to be friendly. But it was exceedingly difficult, particularly for a man, like himself, who was completely isolated from the sweet humanity of the folk be-

neath him and unjustly deprived by life itself of all power of attraction. He smiled somewhat helplessly.

"I should be only too glad to set your mind at rest," he replied uneasily, wriggling his shoulders into a peculiar shrug, as though he were cold, "only too glad; and in certain circumstances I might be able to do so. But what then?"

"What then?" repeated Maria Corleone, with no trace of haughtiness in her voice, and not so much surprised as the Bargello's strange manner might perhaps have warranted. The narrow streaks of sunlight, which the slightly opened shutters still allowed to enter, cut across the neck and shoulders of the man's bowed figure. As he turned thoughtfully aside, she could see his red, somewhat bulging neck, which was far from beautiful, sharply outlined by the cone of light. "Madda says it is an executioner's neck," thought the Princess, "and that it provokes her to murder—she can say the most dreadful things. . . ."

Caminer turned to her and looked up; the rays of the sun caught his face, though they were too low to dazzle his eyes. The bar of light lay at a slight angle across his ruddy beard and made his mouth look crooked. But possibly his lips were also distorted by the intensity of his excitement, which she noticed with alarm. It was impossible to say. The sight of the illumined bearded mouth was repulsive and even terrifying. Maria Corleone leant back, his lips opened and closed, and she could see his strong yellow teeth. But she knew his mouth was not parting in a smile.

"To cut a long story short," said Caminer, as though he had already said a good deal, "to cut a long story short, I have not seen Madda now for many years, many years—fifteen to be exact."

This was a plebeian, clumsy, importunate confession, prompted, as it were, by low ungovernable passion, quite out of keeping with the stately calm and immemorial serenity of the room. Caminer was aware of this and would not have been surprised to receive a snub from Maria Corleone which

would have harmonized with the surroundings, even if it had been only a haughty failure to hear what it was unbecoming to hear, a noble lacerating deafness. And indeed she seemed to be trying to blot out his words by a suitable lapse of time, as though she were wiping them away with a sponge; for she sat silent and unresponsive in the twilight of the majestic chair. But presently the white patch which was her hand rose from the arm of her throne and passed slowly over her breast, neck, cheek, and brow until the latter leant forward and rested upon it. It was a thoughtful or weary gesture, but not an angry one. Caminer waited anxiously, his heart beating more violently.

"I am afraid," she observed with some hesitation, "that Madda does not feel the same desire to see you."

"But she is here, isn't she?" Caminer inquired eagerly, almost cutting her short, and speaking so loud that his voice seemed to drown her murmur by its violence and wipe it out.

"No," she replied in distressed embarrassment, "she has gone away."

Caminer rocked backwards and forwards on his stool, making vain and clumsy attempts to clutch the ray of sunlight that glided across his eyes.

"A mere coincidence, I suppose . . ." he suggested with a cough, and his voice rose thin and falsetto, "a mere coincidence — she did not know. . . ."

"No, no," Maria Corleone interrupted in a whisper, as if she were betraying a secret, "she left just now, when she . . . because you had arrived."

"But . . ." cried Caminer, cutting her short once more; and, springing to his feet, he looked about him with his mouth open. Then bending his back again, he suddenly dropped violently on to the stool as though he had been ordered to do so. The room re-echoed the stir he had caused by a faint ring of glass and metal. Maria Corleone looked up at the ceiling aghast and then swept the room with a glance as he had done, as though she were afraid that somebody had seen what happened or that his ponderous despair had caused some damage. Throw-

ing politeness to the winds, Caminer rested his elbows on his knees, and, with his head resting on his hands, and gazing into space, he forgot where he was and talked to himself. — But, he began, in low, almost timid tones, that was surely impossible! He had driven up full of such joy, such stupendous, expectant joy, that the whole world had danced in time to his leaping heart — the hills, the trees, the glittering walls, the landscape, and the colours, all fresh for him, the devil take them! — The friendly sky, the glorious sun, and even the Cathedral dome had rung in sweetest unison with him. . . . Then he went on even more softly, murmuring ever more fast, low, and incoherently, describing his adventures on the way in strange compelling words. At last only his lips moved; no sound could be heard. Maria Corleone had leant eagerly forward in order to catch what was still audible. She took him quite seriously, for, with her vast experience of suffering, she did not regard his delirium as merely the irresponsible chatter of a mind unhinged; she knew it for what it was, the confession of an infinitely deep, shattering, and relentless passion. In her wasted life, love, which had had its great moments, had always been constrained by form, it had always been, so to speak, well-behaved. And now in this man whom she hated and feared, but who had become entangled with her own fate quite as irrevocably as Guerra or the Grand Duke, she beheld the marvellous ruthlessness of a love such as had never come her way. Not even Guerra as a young man had been capable of it; he had readily allowed himself to be dropped as soon as the Grand Duke had offered his permanent and enduring attachment. At that moment, when the soul's anguish seemed spitefully to be transferred to the rejected body, Maria Corleone again experienced that primitive female hatred of Madda, the woman who had always been preferred, who had not capitulated, and who was actually still desired — that physical envy of twenty years ago, when the girl, with her superior claims and endowments, had stood before her in all the bloom of youth, looking at her breasts, which were beginning to lose their shape, and

gently stroking them with the tips of her fingers. This and other matters had brought things to such a pitch that she had struck the girl in the face.

Hardly knowing why, Maria Corleone again raised her hand and, bending forward, let it rest on Caminer's coat-sleeve. He remained quite calm and did not stir. But he was obviously holding his breath and presently looked curiously out of the corners of his eyes at her hand as though it were some strange, not altogether reliable, creature.

"Let me tell you something, Signor Caminer," she began in her own peculiar way; "Madda is still here. . . ." She paused, because she expected a start or a cry of joy, nay, because, less from kindness of heart than moved by the bewildering sensuousness with which he had infected the air, she wanted to witness a fresh outburst of brutal passion. But Caminer did not stir and continued to gaze silently at her hand. She gave his arm a squeeze, as though to urge him on to the obvious explanation. "How could she have left already?" she asked somewhat faintly. "She is certainly counting on you — on your attachment; but surely she must first find out how far it will be worth her while . . . or, rather, I have to find that out," she added, speaking faster and faster, as though she dreaded being interrupted, "do you understand, Baron? — a sort of arrangement between two women — and now I am supposed to go to her and report that everything is all right, he is still madly in love! — That would be the report, you understand. And Madda would immediately pack off, or say she could not see you, so as to — you know — so as to keep you in tow, Caminer. All this is only a prelude, and need not end today. . . ."

"Well?" he interrupted with startling suddenness, and, turning his head to one side, he raised the arm on which her hand was resting to his lips and seemed in no hurry to release it from his prickly kiss. Maria Corleone, whose knees were trembling with weakness, was suddenly overcome by the bewildering thought that the man was going to tear the full

sleeve from her arm — her arm, which was still beautiful — and that his coarse beard would travel up to her shoulder, her neck, and her mouth without her being able to stop him. But suddenly Caminer opened the trap made by his arm and his mouth and allowed her hand to slip away.

"Well?" he repeated, and there was an intimate note of challenge in his voice.

With a remarkably graceful and feminine movement of her shoulders, the Princess straightened herself and raised her hands to her hair, as though it had been disarranged. Then rising to her feet, she picked up a bronze bell, which was hardly visible on the writing-desk. She held it in her fingers for a second, as though she were reflecting whom she wished to summon. Then, with a masterful shake of her wrist, she rang it, keeping her eyes on the door as she did so. Caminer, sitting doubled up on the stool, with his elbows on his thighs, watched her with considerable curiosity. A maidservant put her head into the room and respectfully inquired what she could do for her mistress. Would she ask the Signorina to be so good as to come at once, replied Maria Corleone in her pleasant calm rich voice, and, so saying, she turned to the desk and put the bell back in its place. It gave a faint stifled tinkle as she did so. Her hand must have been trembling, Caminer's inquisitive mind concluded. The door, as was only fitting, had been noiselessly shut again and Maria Corleone now silently took up a position in front of one of the windows, with her back to the Bargello. Suddenly she threw the shutters open.

"Why do you do that?" Caminer inquired with rude alertness. "The sun is my ally today; the sun will not destroy any illusion of mine, least of all those connected with a beautiful girl!"

Maria Corleone shrugged her shoulders and brought the shutters almost to again. She did not trouble to raise any objection, but went back to the *cassapanca*.

"What sort of a friendship is this?" asked Caminer reproachfully. "Why don't you let her for once enjoy having a

wholly uncritical and unsympathetic man like me as an adorer? ”

Maria Corleone was sitting up very straight in her seat.

“You fool!” she exclaimed after a while.

“Why?” inquired Caminer, supporting himself boorishly with his arms. “I reckon Guerra will probably fall into the soup without any help from me. And I might also add there will be no need for me to fall into the soup myself yet awhile, because I am such a fool — ha ha!”

It was a short ugly laugh, and his words had the characteristic harshness and caution of his well-known pedantic manner in debate. He seemed to have recovered from the frenzy of the last fantastic hours, at the very moment when the Princess had succumbed to it. To Maria Corleone it seemed as though he were once again reinstated in his former terrible office and she did not dare to address another word to the unaccountable creature, for fear of what it might lead to.

Presently Madda’s firm little footsteps could be heard on the tiles of the corridor. Both occupants of the room knew them well, and they exchanged glances. Caminer thrust his short beard forward, clenched and unclenched his hands as they supported his head, and buried them in his whiskers. But he gave no other outward sign of emotion.

“She’s coming,” observed Maria Corleone, quite unnecessarily, possibly only with the view of stimulating his excitement again. There was a knock; he rose slowly to his feet, with his arms hanging at his side, and, as Maria Corleone, who was close up to him, observed, his eyes were closed.

Madda entered. The Princess knew that she was anxious to look beautiful at that moment, and she was a woman who never disappointed her own expectations, but always obeyed her own commands. There was no need for Maria Corleone to examine her to find out what she looked like. She knew Madda’s dark dress, which flattered her figure, and she also knew her figure, which, in spite of the fact that she had lived the most daring of hetairistic lives, had remained young al-

though she had not spared it. She was also familiar with the striking effect produced by her face cream, an excellent preparation, which, although it made the grey and faded skin of the face look somewhat sickly, yet imparted a wonderful maidenly pallor to it. She watched the man with passionate interest. Caminer was standing against the wall like a tired porter. Even his sturdy shoulders, which, as a rule, were well squared, now sloped as though his limbs were too heavy for them. He pressed his chin into his broad cravat and gazed through half-closed eyes at Madda, who greeted him kindly and with seeming good cheer. Caminer replied in monosyllables; at first he had some difficulty in speaking and showed great reserve. Yes, they had not seen each other for a long time and could never have anticipated meeting in such extraordinary circumstances; no indeed. . . .

"You are surely not going to arrest me again today?" cried Madda banteringly. Caminer rejoined stiffly that he was no longer head of the police; as everybody knew, he held no office now and his influence as a private individual seemed to be grossly exaggerated by the ladies — if he might without further ado bring the conversation to the real point at issue. Madda said nothing. She felt hurt and looked at her friend. Maria Corleone shrugged her shoulders desperately, in a manner neither courteous nor well-bred. For the man who had set the riddle was still in the room, now standing firmly with his legs planted slightly apart, a conspicuous figure in those surroundings, out of his place and out of his element, refusing to be seated. Maria Corleone knew that shrugging her shoulders at a guest was impolite, but possibly it was the fellow's own demoniacal ill breeding that had infected her. What was there about this ruddy creature and the half-hour during which he had whirled her senses and her soul about like whirligigs? What had happened about "the real point"? What was it they wanted of this magician?

She pressed her hands to her temples to compose herself.

"If I am not mistaken, Signor Caminer," she began

nervously, "you told me at the beginning of our conversation that you would be ready to calm our fears regarding certain irregular political tactics the Grand Duke is said to be employing."

"Did I say that?" Caminer replied equivocally, and threw his weight on to the other leg. "Then I was overrating my capacities. Foreign politics are in the hands of the Prime Minister, in close conjunction with Signor Guerra, and the Grand Duke is not the man for irregular political practices. To that extent I may be able to calm your fears, dear ladies."

"But you are the man for that sort of thing, Caminer," Madda interjected sharply. "Don't beat about the bush! We surely know each other fairly well by now!"

For the first time Caminer turned to look her full in the face and gazed at her for some time. His round red eyes did not rest, however, but wandered feverishly over her face and figure, though he remained calm. Maria Corleone thought he was going to make another of his smooth evasive replies, which gave an unexpected turn and twist to the question. But Caminer merely asked in low grave tones:

"I am the man for what, Madda? 'Pon my soul, I suppose for the ends for which you summoned me here! I ask you this question, Madda, because, though I know myself very well, personally I doubt it very much indeed."

Both women had sprung to their feet, carried away by the force of his sudden air of frank familiarity. They both uttered the same words — one shouting and the other whispering.

"It is for Guerra's sake!"

Caminer looked from one to the other, from Maria Corleone to Madda, and as his eyes fell on the latter, they began to shine again. He answered her and not the Princess, speaking slowly and deliberately, almost as though he were reading.

"I might reply, what do I care about Guerra? — the man who is pulling at the other end of the rope, and whose strength is failing. But I confess that I care much more about him than

if he were merely a political opponent, even if it may not be in a way that serves your purpose. And I even venture to believe that he would not thank you very much for your negotiations to save him. I know with absolute certainty that he is above that sort of thing, Madda. Possibly I may not be, but he is!"

The two women gazed at him nonplussed. A muscle in the right corner of Maria Corleone's mouth began to twitch in piteous automatism. Caminer failed to notice it, though he saw that Madda's eyes were growing suspiciously bright and that tears were hanging on her long lashes. He gazed in front of him into the distance between the two faces, and slowly revealed his yellow teeth. They both started as by a common impulse and he gave a low tantalizing laugh, muttering and stammering breathlessly as he did so.

"Now," he said, "may I go—*carina?* I shan't find—ha ha—a better finale. . . ."

And he moved towards the door. Madda leant back; then suddenly she sprang after him, grasped his arm, and whispered something in his ear. Caminer opened his eyes wide and looked into the room. His heart started galloping again at the thought of his victory over the hostile apartment, which now seemed to leap in unison with it—the streaks of sunlight, the noble furniture, the *cassapanca*, and Maria Corleone, sitting limply upon it, with her face in her hands. He did not answer Madda by word. Again she gazed with an expression of abject humility into his red, astonished eyes, which were looking away into the distance, over her head. Then she released herself from him and, with bowed head, stepped back. He left without a word. His coachman saw that he was staggering, and that there were beads of sweat on his nose and brow. He raised his eyebrows apologetically, and Maria Corleone's old footman, who closed the carriage door, replied with a sympathetic wink of his lashless eyes.

Caminer drove only to Settignano, the little village close by, and the carriage went back to Florence empty. Throughout

the first half of the journey the coachman never ceased to shake his head.

* * * * *

Madda was not aware that at about ten o'clock, long before the appointed time, Caminer was already pacing to and fro on the high road to Majano, just under the eastern wall of the park of Isola, passing and repassing the iron door, hardly as high as a man's head, which she had described to him. Thanks to the exaggerated eagerness to please on the part of everything on that extraordinary evening, he had found the little door immediately, although in the dark expanse of wall it was not easily seen. The evening was in no way inferior to the day in the fantastic glory of its colours, and the world still continued to pay attention to him. The comradeship of God Almighty—if he might venture to say so—and these manifold products of his alarmingly high spirits had, during the course of that day, been neither capricious nor meaningless, particularly in conjunction with his beating heart; that was certain! There was the rule of law in it all, a consistency, a movement towards an important goal. Was the goal this little iron door? Could all this effort on the part of both divine and terrestrial forces have been aiming at this love-embrace, so strangely secured, in itself hardly honourable, and, with the surrender it implied, paid for in such base coin?—"What!" he cried, indignantly protesting against the thought, "too little for fifteen years of oppression and plaguy dreams; is my joy to be considered base coin?" "Be quiet!" came the reply, "your dream and your joy are all honourable enough; but it is not they which are really opening the little door and that woman's arms to you. Do you want to save Guerra, or can you do so? That is the question, and that is where your somewhat dubious love-coins come in!"

That appeal for Guerra?—Did that account for the miracle of his heart and of the glorious world?

The evening became enchanting for his sake, from the twi-

light which, with the dying glory of the sunset on the poplars, fell near Settignano in the bosom of the valley, to the perfect silvery night now closing about him. True he had been drinking, possibly quite as much as was good for him. His disquieting joy, which, like a rainbow, joined his heart to the phenomena about him, and, as though it had been a real burden, took away his breath, did not pay much heed to detail, and, while it flooded one moment with light, it would cover up the next, with all its activities, completely. All he knew was that he had sat before the straw-covered bottle in the garden of the lonely *osteria* somewhere in the hills below the Castello di Vincigliata under a stupefying canopy of wistaria. One of the bottles had been full and the other empty, with a lighted candle stuck in its broken neck. He had sat alone at the long, stone table, while before his eyes points of light twinkled like stars on the hills, which rose in black waves against the silver-green of the sky. In the vast invisible solitude, a mighty pine, rising from the earthly shadow and casting its arms in magic and magnificent protection about the world, stood out by the monastery in the moonlit air. It was highly probable that he had already drunk a good deal, for the discoveries he had made with his eyes mingled in a strange intoxicated medley with his thoughts. From the tree, which seemed to him so motherly, his mind turned to his mother. As on that day he was inclined to believe there were qualities to be found in everybody, including himself, which had inspired Almighty God to deign to a certain comradeship and arrange the outside world in friendly fashion, and as he had discovered a law of motherly love in the pine, which no mother could escape, his excited and enraptured mind began trying to frame a picture of the unknown woman who had borne him. The Venetian Minorites who had brought him up had discreetly told him that she was a bad woman, a sailors' prostitute of the Giubecca, as he discovered early enough; and since it was she who had endowed him with his ruddy repulsiveness, he had always regarded her as responsible for the wretchedness of his life. And he rested his

hands on the rough surface of the stone table, threw back his head, peered like a seer into the dark arabesques of the blossoms against the brilliant background of the sky, and said half-audibly: "She was naturally good to me." It was not actually a statement of fact, but rather a request, a demand. He expected from his excited though amenable brain some proof of her motherliness, and memories in keeping with it or some beautiful image in their stead. And lo! he beheld a red-haired woman, who, strange to say, was by no means ugly, with a child at her breast. That was all! An apparently obvious and in every way ordinary vision, utterly devoid of interest to the outside world and imparting no information regarding his own fate. But to him it was entirely satisfying and endowed with deep and mystic power over his heart. He drank with joyous greed. An inexhaustible source of sorrow to him — the earliest, indeed — had in a flash been dissipated. His mother was naturally good! The woman in labour with her superhuman task stands beyond good and evil, the destroying and creating body destroys her sin and creates innocence ever anew. Thus did he build a pedestal for his mother! And the nursing mother must inevitably be good! Here he brought his fist down majestically on the solid table, declaring that the nursing mother must be goodness incarnate, even if she had murdered or was going to murder the father of her child. And in his eagerness for reform he became a Radical, eager for adventure. The mother whom he had thus won by his first assault gave him the courage for fresh victories. The very strangeness of that day had made him appear in a more advantageous light, and the further gifts of the evening, together with the efforts, reflections, and successes of his mind, had confirmed or actually created this new position. The good within him was the motor which had set all this and possibly the whole world about him moving on that day. It might be nothing more than an assumption; probably that was so; but it was a possible foundation on which to work; or, rather, on which to live in the most beautiful way. He might exclude himself from reform, or he might regard

himself as already one of the chosen. But lo! Madda was coming. . . .

Suddenly he heard a cough, the only sound to disturb the stillness of the night and his memorable reflections. It was a wretched, hoarse, rattling cough and issued from the open kitchen of the inn. It was the proprietor who was coughing; he had coughed when he first arrived, while he had been giving his order. He was a little man with a goat's beard, and as he had stood beside him, he had noticed his colourless nondescript features. Caminer listened attentively. The sound seemed as out of keeping with the joyousness of the evening as he himself had been with the refined twilight of Maria Corleone's drawing-room. But now a strange and daring thought entered his mind—he was living not only in the midst of a gladness that carried him away, but he also felt endowed with a special power for good tending towards a definite goal. He had been endowed with this power by a benign deity. He had already achieved all manner of things, and felt himself capable of wonders. Why should he not succeed in curing a poor devil of his cough, or—to frame the question more precisely—in ridding this magic night of an unseemly noise? It would be an excellent test of lofty feelings, of lofty courage, which he believed to be something very different from arrogance. He called the proprietor. The little goat-bearded man came coughing along and seized the *fiasco* in a business-like manner. But Caminer held tight hold of it, released the moist hands of the astonished man, and, seizing them in his own, squeezed them and in kind tones begged him not to cough any more. This, he said, was not a complaint, but an attempt to rid him of his trouble. He asked him to return the pressure of his hands, to look into his face and imitate his calm breathing, taking the same length and strength of breath as he did. He then proceeded to breathe, and the little man, with a timid smile and the eyes of a child, pressed his hands and breathed after him. And lo! he ceased to cough and, fetching some of his best wine, sat down at the table and drank and talked. His cure

was a great triumph, the crowning point of the evening, but his chatter was insignificant, and, like the few minutes during which Caminer remained with him, it was soon forgotten.

Even the way back to Isola was not worth remembering. But now began his patrol before the little iron door, and he made the beat sufficiently long to avoid exciting suspicion. But the people passing along the road grew ever more few and far between. The old trees in the park, against which the brilliant night was delicately wafted like some metallic fluid, clinging about them and covering them with charm, were full of the song of night-birds. They were magically beautiful and poured the most delightful network of black and silver on to the short stretch of road which he was patrolling, the whiteness of which had turned to a strange shimmering azure. But the reform of Madda, which he kept stubbornly in mind, made no headway. His good cheer and sense of power stumbled before the iron doorway, and his exalted spirit fled in the opposite direction.

"Whither is this extraordinary day taking me," he asked himself, "the inner law of which I have now recognized? The end must not lie lower than the road that has led up to it. Madda's political embrace lies lower, that is true, and nothing can make it untrue. Does the whole appeal for Guerra also do so? As this man can find no kind or dignified word for unworthy means . . . Stop!"

And he stopped and raised his hands, one of which was milky white in the light of the moon, and the other invisible. Stop! Something ineffably dignified was at stake here, the dignity of life itself, as he had come to know it in every moment, every object, and every thought of that day—"my own dignity!" And he cried out long and eagerly; beside it everything else that might happen, which the early teaching of this day could not know, lay much lower. He, he alone, was at stake on the other side of that door!

And he went up to it and stroked its rusty cracked surface with his hand—standing with his sturdy legs slightly apart,

he waited, lost in the shadow, blotted out, invisible. But the last great thought, which had been so difficult to grasp and which, as it had sunk into his being, was still inchoate and little more than a shudder, had not yet touched his spirit; it might have been the property of another. But, strange to say he pondered over the effect the phantom might already have had upon the man devoid of dignity or who had not yet acquired it. Even yesterday, he, the Bargello, would have gone away, perhaps run away. But now, on this memorable soaring day, he held his ground and crouched closer to the door, remembering even the uttermost thought concerning the day's goal. A faint sour-smelling coolness came from the iron door, which Caminer's hypersensitive feelings strangely characterized as atheistic — possibly because, as he held his face close up against the metal surface, it cut him off from the beautiful world; or was it the substance of his thought materialized and drawing closer? He put his hand between the door and his brow and leant his head against it, closing his eyes. The coldness of the iron passed over his neck and down his back. Just as a moment before, in the wistaria-covered garden of the *osteria*, the pine had reminded him of his mother, so now the little door seemed to stretch out from the vortex of the magic night down to the recognized goal of death. And yet he did not feel terribly frightened, though a shudder passed through his frame. Opening his eyes, he saw nothing; then raising his head, he perceived the silver streamers of the night on the branches of the sycamores. That was what it was! The little door with its odour of graves and cracked blackness might be godless, but the end of life was not godless! It did not end with this door, and the beautiful trees, the magic staffs of the God of night, were inside. . . .

. . . And lo! the door opened! Caminer felt his support gliding from him, but in his new relationship to things, it might only have been that the evil-smelling coolness — nay, horror — was releasing itself from his realization of the goal. Moreover, the slanting position into which his body gently

dropped possessed a secret voluptuousness. He dropped to the ground and again heard the trees singing. Madda uttered a muffled cry, in the same high key. "She has both her hands in front of her mouth," he thought almost cheerfully; "frightened as she is, she still does not venture to shout aloud!" The neglected, overgrown path on which he lay was chequered and streaked by the friendly play of the moon in the branches above. He raised his head and did not at first look at Madda, but at the open door, which was no longer black, but silvery bright—a part of the night, he thought, with a nod of contentment.

"My God!" Madda exclaimed, "what is the matter? . . . Oh, I see! Do get up!"

Caminer gave a friendly smile and rose to his feet. He must have fallen asleep, he remarked, as she carefully and anxiously shut and bolted the little door. He was one of those sturdy plebeian creatures who could sleep standing up, he chuckled softly and slyly to himself. She drew nearer to him.

"Drunk?" she asked, speaking right into his face. "Well, that does not matter! But the fright I had at seeing a body lying there . . . Well, aren't you going to kiss me, my boy?"

And she pressed herself close up to him so that he could not help feeling her body through her diaphanous gown. But he did not bend his head to her upturned face; he gazed beyond her, his cheeks looking pale and his beard faded in the moonlight. Blinking his eyes, he did not even press her to his side, nor did he make any attempt to stop her when, feeling hurt, she quickly stepped back.

". . . How do you mean—a body lying there?" he demanded. "Is that all you have to say! What a thing to say, Madda!—A body drops inwards with the door—or possibly in a dream when asleep. Is that so very terrible? It is only a matter of habit, Maddina! To me, for instance, you were nothing terrible, but merely a passionate longing.—So it was pleasure and pain mysteriously apportioned," he added, speaking

ever more softly and thrusting his turned-up moustaches forward, "mysterious — mysterious — and undignified."

Madda looked at him in silence. "Come along!" she cried, after a while, turning towards the park. He followed her unhesitatingly. They had not gone far when his eye caught sight of a little summer-house in the graceful romantic French style, standing milk-white and charming between oleanders and laurel-bushes. He laughed good-temperedly, but said nothing. Madda turned to cast a fleeting glance at him; she looked as though she were in pain, but still he said nothing. Whereupon she opened the door of the summer-house, entered, and struck a light.

"Come along," she repeated. He stood in the doorway, looking in. The place consisted of a single room, in which stood a couch, a few light garden-chairs, and a table spread with fruit, wine, and pastries.

"Very pleasant," he observed gravely, "very attractive!"

It was here, Madda explained, that the little summer-house had once stood, the outside of which was so dilapidated, where in 1830 Guerra had held his meetings with his Party officials. After his arrest Maria Corleone had had it pulled down and this little chalet built in its stead.

"A little pleasure-hut instead of the rebels' den; that shows humour rather than piety," observed Caminer, still standing on the threshold.

"Why don't you come in?" she inquired uneasily.

"It is not such a simple matter, Madda," he replied, with an embarrassed gesture, "nor is it easy to explain why."

"I am too old for you!" she exclaimed, raising her eyebrows. Caminer shook his head, emphatically and rather slowly.

"Oh no," he replied at last, "there is no longer any question of that! It began with the joy I felt about you, which grew greater and greater every minute — it grew, so to speak, beyond me. I was forced to rejoice over the whole world, it was trying for the heart, Madda, and is difficult to describe. I have been through and experienced a great deal today, and God's

loving-kindness towards me has been connected with discoveries, efforts, visions, and claims of every kind. I have been preoccupied with all manner of things, naturally including myself and mankind, whom I love. And when a man is favoured as I have been today, he ultimately attains a somewhat lofty pinnacle of clarity and charity, Madda."

She did not look at him, but became extremely uneasy, stroking her brow, her face distorted in anguish.

"Madda," he continued, full of compassion, "if you really want me to, I will come in, but I should not like to be better than you. Indeed, for two hours I have been working for your good conscience, if I may so express it, and still I cannot arrive at anything. . . ."

The couch was covered with a fur rug reaching to the floor. Madda lifted it a little and with her foot pushed forward an object and kicked it in the direction of the door. It rang like steel on the tiles. It was a pistol. Caminer bent silently forward and put it in his pocket. Whereupon she dropped on to the couch with a weary, hopeless expression. He closed the door softly behind him, so as not to disturb her, came up to her on tip-toe with his body bent forward, and, looking somewhat ridiculous, sat down opposite her on a wicker chair. Then leaning over her, he stroked her hand. She let him do so, though she looked away.

"My conscience!" she exclaimed suddenly. "I don't wish to make myself out better than I am, and I am probably even worse than you are. For I don't feel the least bit happier than I did two minutes ago, or relieved or released. . . . *Dio*, released — from what, in God's name? Certainly not from you!"

She probably did not expect him to reply, but with a spiteful jerk drew her hands up to her chest. Caminer looked very sadly at his lonely hand. His humility seemed to provoke her. She grew more spiteful and a pinched smile played about her mouth, making her look ugly.

"To be quite frank, Caminer, I am not at present in the least bit aware of having risen to your new moral plane, nor do

I feel in need of doing so. I am more inclined to think you have imposed upon me in the most obvious manner."

"You can have the thing back," he replied softly. "But now it will be doubly hard for you—that other release I mean—for I shall never be able to fall asleep here—you can see that for yourself."

What had happened in Maria Corleone's drawing-room earlier in the day was now repeated and Madda cried in her stiff haughty way. Her eyes glittered more and more, but her face did not move.

"For Heaven's sake, speak!" he implored her almost in fear.

"Oh yes," she replied at once, her eyes still glittering. "Just wait a bit. One can cry with rage. One feels one is right. One knows—I know that you are wrong from the roots, bad from the roots, with your incurable, God-forsaken ambiguity! And if this is your new goodness, then it is as bad as your old wickedness. One does not speak like that to a human being, to a woman, who has actually contemplated murder!" And, clenching her fists, she twisted them about in a terrifying way from her slender wrists. "No, not murder!" she hastened to add in a voice ever more shrill and tenuous, "but killing, eliminating, yes. Yes! Yes! Release! Yes, and for a great cause—for the sake of a great man!—One cannot deceive people by using Almighty God like a magic hood!"

Cammer had slowly raised himself up and was now sitting erect, with his back hollow and his head resting on the nape of his neck as though her strange accusation had come from above. His brow was wet with perspiration.

"I think I understand you perfectly," he replied very gently.

"What then?" she cried wildly. "What can you understand? Do you understand that your extraordinary day has done nothing to elevate your disgusting life? Do you understand that you have no right to either clarity or charity? I don't believe you do! Come here to me with your old red-skinned longing, make yourself drunk, use me, and then sleep yourself into the death that lies hid in the couch. That would settle

accounts in a smooth clear way and would be a not unfitting end to your life. Or you might pretend to be asleep and with your criminologist's shrewdness wrench the pistol out of my hand and shoot me in self-defence and avenge yourself and score a Bargello triumph! That would be the other kind of justice. But don't psalm-sing the weapon out of my hand and then offer it to me again — that is the height of duplicity. For if you really wish to be rid of your old hide — ”

“Now,” Caminer interrupted hoarsely, opening his eyes wide, “now for the inevitable logical conclusion. . . .”

“Yes, yes!” cried Madda, still weeping, “then do not offer me the thing again, but keep it for yourself!”

His moustaches rose and fell, his powerful neck could plainly be seen gulping something down. Then he opened his mouth a little and took a deep breath.

“You need not believe it,” he replied, trying to smile, “but my heart reacts even to your logic — there must be something in it. . . .”

And, with a thoughtful expression, he rose to his feet, went over to the table, and poured himself out some wine. She fell back on the couch again, supporting her neck with her hands.

“My husband has written to me from Paris,” she said suddenly in fairly calm tones, “telling me that in Rome you met Prussian diplomats, and that in Forli you held negotiations with Austrian agents.”

Caminer emptied his glass and turned his face slowly towards her.

“Yes,” he replied, with a nod, and went back to the couch, “your husband is, as usual, well-informed.”

She cast a fleeting glance up at him.

“You are conferring about what you should do if we are decisively beaten in the field?”

“Of course!”

“Renew the alliance with Austria?”

“That is my aim.”

Madda turned to look at him. She saw his face from below, grimly foreshortened — beard, lower jaw, and nostrils.

"*Your aim?*" she exclaimed. "Do you mean that the Grand Duke thinks differently?"

"That would be saying too much; but he has qualms of conscience, or, rather, Guerra exercises a powerful influence over him."

"Well?" Madda persisted, raising herself up. He sat down on the couch.

"When things have reached a climax," he replied, "I, of course, have the greater influence."

"The Prince will desert!"

"He will yield to my persuasion and leave the country before the Austrians come in."

"And Guerra?"

"Austrian court martial, so as to spare the Grand Duke judicial and personal complications!"

Her face was now quite close to his. He could feel her breath and smell the fragrance of her hair.

"That is really the truth, I suppose?" she muttered. "That is the truth! And that is your damnable part in the infernal game! Why — why do you tell me all this?"

"In order to make you better and better, Madda. That is important for me. I might almost say that I have a right to assure myself of your lack of affection."

His cheeks with their ugly tufts of hair, thin at the temples and growing thicker towards the chin, trembled as he uttered these self-confident, superior words. And his mouth also trembled when he stopped speaking. Madda looked with peculiar intentness at his coarse dry lips.

"Yes," she said, her mouth almost touching him, "a small proof, isn't it? Because one loves him — madly, madly."

"Madly . . ." he repeated, and his lips fell on her mouth. She pulled his body down upon her.

He dragged himself away from her, or rather he pushed her from him and stood up. Then he staggered to the table and drank. She turned on her side and put her head in her hand.

"You haven't made me better," she said.

"No," he replied rudely, "no, I have merely dragged you through the mud again."

"You have dragged me?" she cried. He turned and looked at her.

"Yes," he replied at last, "I—you! People like us can place more reliance on mud than on cleanliness. Possibly with dignity alone I should not be able to show the necessary courage. Loathing—loathing is a better spur."

"I thought so too," she rejoined, and without further ado added: "It is a double-barrelled pistol."

Caminer shrugged his shoulders.

"Your brother," he said coldly, "once asked me why I wished to degrade myself to be his executioner. But I shall degrade myself neither for him nor for you."

"Oh!" she cried with a short laugh, and pointed to the couch on which she was lying. "You have just this minute degraded yourself for him! I was thinking of him the whole time. That is the old wrong which my unfortunate relations with men bring about."

He rubbed his brow and temples in a strangely painful way. Then slowly baring his teeth, he gave vent, not to a laugh, but to a sob and went out. Madda followed him. His broad, slightly bowed back preceded her in the bright light of the moon. She thought he was going to ask her to open the little iron door for him. But he found the half-hidden bolt with astonishing ease, opened the door, and stepped on to the road. Nor did he turn round. He did not seem to have noticed that she was following him.

"My good man . . ." she muttered after him, "my good man . . ."

He did not turn round, but unhesitatingly walked in the direction of Majano. Silver streaks of moonlight and the shadow

of the branches made his back look now light, now dark, and then light again, and soon he was out of sight. But his footstep could still be heard. The only sound in the world seemed to be his footstep! With eyes aghast, Madda stood in the opening of the little door and continued to listen to his footstep, and she was still listening when he was already far away beyond Majano and climbing the magic hill. He knew his way. He was looking for the pine which had reminded him of his mother, and found it as easily as he had found everything else he had looked for on that day. Then taking off his coat, he sat down on it and leant against the trunk of the tree. Looking up, he saw himself sheltered and shut off even from the starlit clear blue sky. He still had all manner of things to reflect upon and indulged in the pleasure of reverently reviewing every moment of the day once more in thought. He gave himself time.

Madda could still hear his footstep and waited. Presently she grew tired and, sitting down in the doorway, fell asleep. But she still heard his footstep.

She was not wakened by the dull report of a shot in the distance, nor by the barking of the dogs who far and near expressed their resentment at the sound, but by a wood-louse which had crept, cold and loathsome, across her hand. She cried out and shook her hands, and continued shaking them as she ran away. Then standing still and holding her breath, she heard his footstep again, and, mortally afraid, she burst into tears.

THE GIFT OF BLOOD

*The beauty of life does not grow less because
its ugliness is great.*

I

FAT Canon Vacca, though he was not unmoved by the death of his master, was more than ever pleased with the sensational and surprisingly numerous dramas that had been enacted on the stage of his existence. At the request of the Minister Guerra, he drew up a report of the way in which Caminer had spent his last hours, so far as this could be ascertained. It was the first time that Don Lionello's services had been requisitioned by Guerra, the Minister. The commission pleased the fat priest, since it once more put him formally in touch with the lives of the people he knew so well, and also gave him a timely opportunity, for which he was grateful, of showing by his zeal and devotion that he was anxious to make up to Guerra the Minister for the attitude he had been forced to adopt towards Guerra the Rebel. Moreover there was much that was precarious in the undertaking — precarious and unpleasant in view of the dark designs pursued by Signor Guerra in his inquiry. But when Vacca stood before the mighty man, before the great Guerra in fact, he was once more conscious of that liking which he had always felt for this remarkable personality. He therefore resolved to unfold in a cold, clear, and business-like way certain results of his investigations which the remnants of good nature hailing from his seminary days had at first prompted him to keep somewhat vague. Whereupon, assuming an expression of official zeal and respect, he proceeded to report. It had been proved that the late lamented Baron Caminer had driven from Florence to the Princess's country-seat at Isola, and that, according to the coachman who had driven

him, and who had been cross-examined, his unusually high spirits during the drive were due to his being slightly intoxicated. He had stayed an hour at the Princess's house, after which he had driven to Settignano and sent his carriage home. He had next been seen in the evening at the *osteria* of Signor Giuseppe Poli, nicknamed Beppino, situated in the hills between the Convent of San Majano and the Castello di Vincigliata. Finally, early on the following day, under a pine about five hundred yards from his *osteria*, the body had been discovered by this same Poli, who displayed a strange though by no means suspicious admiration for the personality of the deceased. According to the medical officer of the district of Fiesole, there was no doubt whatever that the deceased had met his death by suicide.

Don Vacca closed his eyes and solemnly raised his hand. Those were the patent facts. The most important gap which occurred between his lordship's so-to-speak furtive departure from the *osteria* and the firing of the shot, at about two o'clock in the morning, which Signor Poli had heard, though he had not, of course, gone out to investigate it immediately—this lapse of time, thanks to the valuable information provided by his Excellency, could in the main be accounted for. The little door pointed out by his Excellency in the eastern wall of the park had apparently been quite recently opened, and of the fresh footprints inside the park, from the little door to the chalet close by, those made by a man's feet had been definitely identified as belonging to the late Baron Caminer.

"And what about the female footprints?" Guerra immediately inquired.

"Ah, yes!" replied Don Lionello. But he stopped short, sucking in his cheeks with embarrassment. After all, he had once been in love with this devilish Madda, although he had not met with much success. And as his heart was full of deep though somewhat unfounded gratitude to women, his conscience had long been heavy enough with regard to her.

"I suppose you have questioned my sister?"

"Yes," Don Lionello replied, in a voice so much repressed by his feelings of delicacy that it sounded oily. He had had a conversation with the lady, prompted, in the first place, by those marks of a lady's shoes, with a view to making the necessary comparisons, as his Excellency would readily understand; and the investigation had proved entirely successful. On the other hand, he had found it impossible to extract any statement from the lady in regard to the events of that night, which, owing to his inadequate gifts, both as a man and as an inquisitor, was not surprising.

"Did she deny having met Baron Caminer that night?" demanded Guerra.

"She neither admitted nor denied it," replied Don Vacca cautiously, though he also acknowledged that since the answer to this question had already been obtained in another way, it had not been put to her in this precise form. The lady had remarked in conclusion that she was only called upon to give an account of her actions to one person, and that was his Excellency—a perfectly satisfactory explanation, or, at least, so Don Lionello thought at the time.

There was a short pause. Then, without any change in either voice or expression, Signor Guerra put a strange, suspicious, though not altogether unexpected question.

"Did it occur to you, *Reverendo*, to investigate the origin of the weapon with which Baron Caminer took his life, and which, according to the police-surgeon's report, he still held in his hand when he was found?"

Beads of perspiration broke out on Don Lionello's cheeks. In moments of tense excitement his bald head would sweat, and itching red patches would appear on his temples and cheekbones. It was not so much the question itself as the disappointment of his hope that Guerra would not think of such an insidious detail that troubled him. He was annoyed that he, a spectator rather than a participator in the exciting drama, should suddenly be called upon to supply the properties for

the tragic piece, while running the risk of remaining hidden behind the responsible actors. Was not what he had clearly and straightforwardly reported sufficient — sufficient for the finest of tragic scenes between this strange brother and sister? Was not the known connexion between Madda and Caminer during the latter's lifetime sufficient? Did this terrible brother and judge wish by his energy in unravelling the mystery to connect her with Barbarossa's death? — Then why did not Don Lionello, who in the double dealings of his life had shouldered many an official lie on behalf of the criminal police, why did not Don Lionello tell his Excellency that he had not looked for the weapon? — But he could not say that, because Maria Corleone herself . . .

"Have you any personal qualms about answering the question?" asked Guerra sternly.

"Signor Guerra," replied the Canon, suddenly speaking from the summit of his giant stature as from a pulpit, "as a matter of fact, the pistol came from Princess Corleone's gun-room, and the Princess has assured me in tears — honest tears — that she cannot understand it. And I, for my part, as a person in no way implicated, also refuse to understand it, because I believe that is the only way we can save Madda — I mean Signora Madda's soul. And as for you, your Excellency, if I may say so with all due respect, you are not a Crown advocate."

"No," replied Guerra, "I am her brother."

So saying, he shook the Canon's hand and dismissed him. He had not shaken hands with him at the beginning of the interview, and the act seemed to indicate that he was satisfied. Nevertheless, fat Vacca was not at all sure what to do next. As he looked back on the interview, he could find no comfort. Had he wished to avoid being dragged into the matter in this unpleasant way, he should either have pretended to be stupider than he was or else have been clever enough to be more reticent. He, least of all men, could allow himself to exaggerate the importance of certain episodes. And the great Guerra, as God well knew, was an episode in the theatre of his day, which was

already getting fresh scenery ready. He looked down on the deserted streets and the forlorn placards exhibiting the telegrams from the front, which every schoolboy knew to be all lies. — This man Guerra! And, as was his wont at difficult moments in his life, Don Lionello went to the Church of Santa Trinità to find help and solace for his soul in the chapel of St. Bernard.

Meanwhile Guerra wrote a short note to his sister, telling her to return to Paris immediately, without attempting to see him before she went. Any such attempt would be risky, as the Attorney-General was showing signs of wishing to cross-examine her concerning the last hours of President Caminer.

The one-eyed Orestes, who was unsusceptible to women's charms, was ordered to deliver the letter, to superintend the lady's departure, and to accompany her as far as Pistoia.

The Grand Duke received the news of Caminer's death with remarkable composure and himself advised his ministers, in view of the nervous tension of the public mind, to conceal the truth about the tragedy — a proceeding in which they had acquired some practice of late, he added with a smile — and to ascribe the death, as was usual in such cases, to a hunting accident. In conversation with Guerra, however, he observed, pulling his whiskers:

"I am doing this, as you are probably aware, largely out of consideration for you."

"For me?" exclaimed Guerra. "How do you mean?"

"I need hardly explain that Caminer's death means that your political position has become stronger. I have to acquiesce in a state of affairs which, in spite of certain suspicious features, strikes me as neither immoral nor in any way illogical."

"Suspicious features?" repeated Guerra, looking straight in the Prince's face.

The Grand Duke bit his thick under lip and released it again.

"Pardon me," he exclaimed, "I might just as well have said

unsuspicious. I do not condemn her, because I have also tried my hand at that sort of thing. I am neither an amateur nor a fool who, owing to his own failure, refuses to acknowledge another's success. I give honour where it is due."

"What do you give honour for?"

"For the ingenuity with which, without much coercion, you are turning me into one of those brave captains who, in accordance with the hero's code of honour, refuse to leave the sinking ship."

"What a mistake!" cried Guerra. The Grand Duke gazed at him aghast.

"Why do you force me to make myself plain, Signor Guerra? Very well, why not? There is nothing very abstruse or puzzling about it. There can no longer be any question of indiscretion either. Poor Caminer — and I say 'poor' not so much on account of his death as on account of his life, Signor Guerra — poor Caminer had himself confessed to me that he was in love with your sister. He knew the danger so well that he had actually begged me to help him. And, in exchange, he promised to help me against her brother, to whom, as everyone knows, she has been useful and devoted from the beginning. Of course I refused. I do not pay sufficient heed to the suffering of others. And I actually sent him into the trap. God knows what I was thinking of!"

Guerra shook his head, but did not defend himself. He did not even answer.

2

Madda obeyed. She had no alternative. Maria Corleone, whom she did not take into her confidence, had left Isola without taking leave of her, immediately after Canon Vacca had gone. The servants were whispering. For some unaccountable reason she was regarded as suspect and quickly placed beyond the pale. She did not leave her room, unable to forget the fear that had darted through her frame to her very entrails

and extremities when, after that dreadful night, a chambermaid had brought her the news. The ruddy Bargello had shot himself dead through the mouth — a terrible sight, declared Bappino, the inn-proprietor who had found him. Strange that he should have shot himself close by; strange too that he had been there only the day before. — A genuine fright. But why was she frightened? She knew. And as she reflected, she suddenly felt desperate. One-eyed, monosyllabic Orestes appeared as a deliverer.

She went no farther than Spezia. Here the news reached her of the catastrophe that had overtaken the National Army — a flood of excitement, despair, and fear rushed up from the valley of the Po. She could not proceed on her journey; all the roads were blocked or rendered dangerous by deserters and small bodies of troops that had been cut off from their units. But possibly she did not wish to proceed. At all events, she turned back and made, not for Florence, but for Livorno, where Menozzi and the Radical clubs had long been prepared for the hour that had now struck.

The disaster had been in the air for some time. People had drawn it in with their life-breath and were filled with a numbed feeling of hopelessness. They had seen ever more and more clearly through the omissions and lies of the official telegrams and knew that the Army of Liberation had been steadily retreating. Freedom did not lie in the direction of Milan, and they were prepared for the worst. But when the decisive defeat came, and the headlong retreat of the defeated troops began, when the *Re Tentenna*, a courageous man, who had been exposed to threats and insults all his life, marched through the town, followed by the Iron Marshal — who thus saw Milan again as he had undertaken to do — and, like an angry Zeus hurling the thunderbolts of martial law, occupied the town, while other hated white-tunicked regiments calmly and without firing a shot advanced towards central Italy, the whole country trembled as in a nightmare. In Paris the *Capo*, who knew the value of such nightmares for turning men into

Radicals, immediately gave tongue to the slogan, which came from his heart: "Salvation through a Republic!"

Florence was in a state of unrest. Her streets seemed suddenly to be thronged with people, chiefly strangers to the town, and suspiciously busy. A shabbily dressed man, from Nice, took up a position on the Piazza and announced that all the Italian sovereigns had been deposed. The crowd understood but little of his nasal twang and, pointing to his untidy growth of beard, recommended him to go to the nearest barber. The sceptical town, dazzled by its own beauty, refused to be moved by the shock.

Menozzi's program was already in the hands of the Government. Not only did he demand the deposition of the Grand Duke, but also his "arrest, to put an end to his anti-National agitations," and furthermore the assumption of the reins of Government by a Radical Directorate, with the object of converting the country into an Italian Federal Republic and of reorganizing the War of Liberation. The document containing an ultimatum to the effect that the Livorno Party troops would march against Florence in twenty-four hours did not mention Guerra by name at any point.

"They already regard me as anonymous," Guerra remarked, with a smile, at the Cabinet meeting, "a mere particle of the bankrupt masses whom they will sweep into the gutter with their Radical brooms. I, on the other hand, regard myself as their miscalculation."

His self-confidence was astounding, and Scaletterra, for one, did not think it genuine, although he admired it. The situation was more than grave, it was indeed desperate. The Government had no troops; the Civic Guard, which had been called up, barely sufficed to police the country, and the reports about the political sympathies and morale of the decimated Tuscan troops and volunteer regiments, who were beating a retreat, were contradictory. This much at least was certain—Parma and Modena were already in the hands of the Austrians, while it was also quite clear that the revolutionary

Livornese troops would reach Florence, which was quite unprotected, sooner than the more or less reliable remnants of the army.

"All the better," observed Guerra to Scaletterra, who had just drawn up a plain unvarnished statement on the situation; "the fact that they will not meet is all in favour of our primary task, which is a noble one — to prevent civil war."

"So you are accepting the Radical ultimatum?" Marchese Bottai inquired excitedly.

Guerra looked from the speaker to Scaletterra, and from his friend's twitching nose to the clear peaceful brow of the blind man.

"I take over the whole of the responsibility from you, gentlemen," he replied calmly, "and from the Council of State I accept the full powers of Dictator."

"A dictatorship?" exclaimed Scaletterra, after a pause, scrutinizing him with his intelligent eyes. "A dictatorship without arms? Surely what you mean, Gasto, is that you are going to try to crush the Livorno movement with your name and deprive it of its anarchical character, is that it?"

"Yes," replied Guerra, "my object might be paraphrased in your words. I shall first endeavour to gain a certain influence over the Livorno opposition and afterwards over the remnants of the army on their return."

"But," objected Scaletterra, with quivering nostrils, "but what if your name no longer — no longer has the necessary power? . . . You know, Gasto, that, particularly in Livorno, you have to a large extent lost your popularity."

"The *commediante*, my friend," replied Guerra with a smile, "has not strutted the boards for a long time now. But he can still act. You can rely on that! The tenor will sing back the name to men's memories. And if in the last act he has to die, Scaletterra, my God! then don't undervalue the effect on the emotions of the people. . . ."

"And what about the Grand Duke?" inquired the blind man from his far-distant isolation. The Prince, replied Guerra

unhesitatingly, would have to renounce his powers, which, as it was, were merely formal. As far as he could see, he would not put many obstacles in the way.

"And what is to become of him?" asked Bottai. Guerra shrugged his shoulders. He did not know yet.

* * * * *

The carriage conveying the blind Minister and Guerra to the Grand Duke drove slowly across the Piazza towards Por Santa Maria. The square was full of animation; the people showed more curiosity than hostility, and the majority of those who recognized the two Ministers saluted them. Guerra acknowledged their greetings absent-mindedly, his thoughts disturbed by a strange uneasiness. The blind Minister also bowed his acknowledgment when the movements of his companion indicated the moment; but, although he was always a little too late, he bowed with such extraordinary dignity that both man and beast should have acclaimed him forthwith. Guerra was obsessed by the thought which latterly he had had constantly in mind—the hour had come, though not with the same terrible physical punctuality for him as for Maria Pia. During the few moments it took to cross the Piazza, however, it became something more than a thought; it became a sort of searching for some strange insensate word of command. He searched the square in all directions, his teeth clenched, his sallow jaws set, and his conscience heavy. For, good God! that human life, which meant so much to him and clung to him, must not creep away like a wounded animal into the solitude of death, which passes imagination. My God, there she was—he was obliged to twist his head round to make sure—there by the equestrian statue of Cosimo! His neck, throttled by a cravat that was too tight, made his vision untrustworthy, or was it his heart? . . . He dug his hands into each other; what did it matter whether he were certain or uncertain? There she stood, contorted and distorted, looking in his direction, blaming, exhorting, and calling him!

The shudder that passed through his frame was felt by his blind companion, who raised his hat and bowed.

Guerra gazed at him. The carriage was already in the narrow street leading from the Piazza to Por Santa Maria. He gazed at the blind Minister. What a magnificent bow he had made! And what a sacred meaning lay behind his mistake! Such deep love shone in Guerra's eyes, as they gazed at the face so close to his, that a faint quiver passed over the blind man's eyelids, and, smiling, he raised his hand as though he were listening to some sound.

"I don't think we have ever been such friends as we are at this moment," he observed suddenly. "And I really cannot say what the reason is."

"I know the reason," replied Guerra, lightly touching his hand. "I have seen her!"

"Yes," agreed the blind man with a nod. "I cannot see. I know your face only through my ears and my feelings. Yet I cannot say that I do not know it well. It can be so hard, so hard, that not only I, but also the others, who can see and who are therefore inured, and even you yourself, can come up against it and be hurt. But now it is soft and relaxed as though a woman's fingers were stroking it."

"Yes," answered Guerra, "but there are no such fingers there. And you, not I, raised your hat to the lady. A poor woman — expecting, as they say — and desperate, as I happen to know. I left her about half a generation ago, although possibly not in the spirit. There is something terrible about love in the spirit. It drags the loved one down. It turns even motherhood into a sin against itself, perhaps even into death. Humanity is much more guilty than innocent."

The blind man was silent; the expression on his face was mild and detached, as though he were asleep. The carriage drove over the Ponte Vecchio. The mild summer breeze stroked the lazy waters.

"But we human beings," said the blind Minister softly, "are much more innocent than guilty. The only human being I can

see is myself. And I see myself from inside, as though I had my mask across my face. I have a very shrewd idea of what I look like. I look the extreme opposite of a murderer. Yet I have helped you to send many a young man to his death. The fact that in this innocence plays a greater part than guilt is recognized even by the conscience of this day, which seems to be very severe. It is far more a matter of insight than of repentance, more a gift than a punishment from God, that we should now be doing what still remains for us to do — fighting against purposeless death."

"Yes," replied Guerra, "but not against purposeful death."

The blind man turned his face as though he were trying to look at him.

"No, you must not desert, Guerra, for then death would lose its good purpose—even if that poor woman whom I greeted should be all you have left."

Guerra shook his head as though his companion could see him. The carriage drove past the barracks of the Guardia Mobile, and the palace gradually loomed into full view.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Guerra.

"Yes," replied the blind man with a smile. "We have to depose a Prince. Had I not been your friend already, I should have to be so now, because you have not been talking about it."

* * * * *

"Behold my two executioners!" exclaimed the Grand Duke as he greeted them. "I hope my obstinacy will not upset you."

The blind Minister allowed Guerra to lead him to a chair and remained standing for a moment, touching the edge of the chair with his knees, possibly waiting for the Prince to invite him to be seated. His friend pressed his arm gently. He understood and sat down. He felt that Guerra was standing behind him.

Guerra had the blind man's head, with its wealth of long, white hair, beneath him; it seemed, as it were, to radiate light, clarity, and calm. And it struck him that the figure of the

Grand Duke, standing opposite them, looked mean and lonely, grey and woebegone, by comparison. But from the very beginning he proved obstinate.

Guerra explained to him why the executive power must provisionally be placed in the hands of a suitable political Minister, and that he himself must be the man. If he could not stop the Radicals from marching to Florence, he hoped at least to prevent them from seizing the reins of power, with the inevitable anarchy that would result. He spoke more slowly and softly than usual, not because he did not feel confident, but, as it were, out of respect for the blind head below him. The Grand Duke saw the two strange faces in front of him, one above the other, and felt depressed and at a disadvantage. Moreover, the impregnable face of the blind Minister disarmed him. He felt as though his own pride and dignity, of which he had been deprived, were standing arrayed against him. "Why should they be right," he asked himself in annoyance, "just because I know that their trouble is in vain and they, at least, are not yet aware of it? And even if a moment ago my remark about executioners was disingenuous, am I not honestly well-disposed towards Guerra?"

"I don't quite understand you, Signor Guerra," he said, clasping his hands. "You know that I am determined to remain at my post. You have no longer any reason to fear my desertion, which would at least have justified your dictatorship. You will remember that in a certain conversation we had I used the simile of the captain and his sinking ship. I wish to remain on the sinking ship, but as captain, naturally. Why don't you wish to carry on the fight against anarchy as my Minister?"

"Why this resistance," Guerra asked himself, "this fresh entanglement of the threads between us two, and the same old mistrust?"

"In your name," he replied patiently, "I must fight and be fought against. In my own I may be able to guide the movement into peaceful channels. Surely you understand!"

"I understand all sorts of things," rejoined the Prince, "except your pettifogging arguments, Signor Guerra. Why don't you say right out that you have to obey your Party orders and to prepare the way for a republic? When things had not reached such a pitch, you spoke more openly, you remember."

Guerra glanced with a faint smile at the blind man's head, but did not answer. The Prince brushed the grey forelock from his brow; the blind man was the supreme guarantor of Guerra's sincerity. Why had the Grand Duke used that infamous expression "pettifogging arguments"?

"Do you want to cause bloodshed?" the blind Minister asked him suddenly. The Grand Duke looked up sharply in great distress, his thick under lip protruding.

"Up to the present I have caused less bloodshed than Signor Guerra."

"Well?" said Guerra softly. Suddenly he started and the blind man clung terror-stricken to the arms of his chair. The Grand Duke had allowed the heavy ivory paper-knife with which he had been toying, to fall to the ground. He felt a sudden impulse to create a stir, so to speak, and to rebel against the stolid calm of both the room, the two men, and himself. Striking the table once, twice, thrice, with his bony fists, his face purple with rage, he shouted:

"What is it you want, then? What are you cross-questioning me about? What are you flaunting your importance at me for? Am I not sufficiently aware of it? Don't you know that, day and night, I have been thinking how I could save you from a court martial? Don't you know that you absorb the whole of my conscience, and leave over for my people only that fragment of duty which is their bare due? It would perhaps be better for the country if I were already on board the Austrian frigate which is cruising before Rimini."

Guerra was very pale. His jaw was hard set and his chin brutal. "The beloved Guerra!" were the spiteful words that formed in his mind. The Grand Duke had taken a paper

from his pocket and was waving it about. His swollen under lids were twitching and his voice suddenly grew hoarse.

"Yes, Signor Guerra, yes, Signor Guerra, you have become inferior to the political situation, just as I have, although you have the face of the *condottiere* and I have not. He who cannot command must perforce obey. And when all-powerful Fate desires to spend men lavishly, one must shut one's humanitarian mouth. That applies not only to you, Signor Guerra, but also to me. Nevertheless, I promise you not to be too conceited over my victory."

So saying, he moved forward in front of the writing-table. The hand in which he held the telegram was trembling violently. Guerra took the telegram and read it in silence. The blind man looked up.

"What is going to happen now, I am sure I don't know," he said softly.

"I am going to read a message from enemy headquarters to the Grand Duke," observed Guerra calmly. "'Lieutenant-General Walden, with his division, reports that the Tuscan Corps has been dispersed and its remnant taken prisoner. By order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial and Royal Armies he will now march into Tuscany, to nip in the bud any possible anarchical uprisings, to uphold order in the interests of the Grand Duke, and to help him to restore the *status quo ante*. He will march on Florence with his troops within forty-eight hours. In case it may be necessary for the Grand Duke to leave the capital, the frigate *Prince Eugen*, cruising outside Rimini, is at his disposal.'"

Guerra folded the telegram and gave it back to the Prince. The blind man rose from his chair.

"Your Highness," he said softly, "would you mind telling us plainly why you wish to stop in Florence and remain at the head of the executive until the Austrians arrive?"

The Prince leant wearily against the writing-table.

"Was I so obscure?" he asked. "I wish to remain in order to protect the revolutionary members of my present Ministry

from being court-martialled by the Austrians, or at least enable them to escape. Moreover, I wish to spare the people of Florence, to whom, for good or evil, I am to be left, the entertainment of seeing me vanish and reappear again." Then turning to Guerra, he added: "This time I have mentioned no names. Are you not satisfied with this piece of intelligence, which is at least tactful?"

"Yes," replied Guerra, going up to him. "I am particularly satisfied with your frankness. Please consider yourself under arrest!"

"Guerra!" exclaimed the Prince, leaning back. "If ever in my life I have been honest, it is in my anxiety about you!"

The blind man raised his hand in warning, but it was in the wrong direction, and Guerra did not notice him.

"The situation has changed," he declared. "I see now that the demand of the Livornese that Your Royal Highness should be placed under arrest is justified. I also see that in these altered circumstances my dictatorship must be a Radical and National one. Moreover, it is clear that my own situation and that of my people is desperate; but so is yours, your Highness. You are right; I must shut my humanitarian mouth and use your person as a hostage in accordance with all the rules of the game. I am afraid you will not be able to leave the Palace now."

The Grand Duke looked into his face with his pale eyes, in which astonishment still lurked. He said nothing, but he did not lower his glance.

Suddenly Guerra turned round, went over to the blind man, who had moved away from his chair in alarm and was standing forlornly in the middle of the room, and, taking his arm, led him out.

"By God, Guerra," he exclaimed in the carriage, "I believe you have lost!"

3

Every hour until late that night was crowded and of the utmost importance, full to overflowing with conferences and decisions, reached amid grave, sceptical, resolute, responsible, and jealous-looking faces. Guerra watched them come and go; he conducted negotiations, passed decrees and exerted his will to the utmost, imposing it on the holders of various offices and dignities, or else intimidating them. He sat at the great writing-table in his office, a cold stern expression on his face, his sharp eyes telling him that the majority of the gentlemen whom he interviewed wished him to the devil.

Even in his present predicament his critical faculty was as keen as ever. What was the meaning of his secret desire to make fun of his own dictatorial activities? On what was the overweening pride of such feelings based? Was it due to the elevation of the human standpoint, or to the enhanced power of the soul, which, after all, had lost in the sight of God? Why did his stubborn spirit uphold him in thinking that the political work of this hour was nothing more than a farce, nothing more than the almost diverting storm before the lull of a mighty personal decision? What great event could be on its way, what light could be thrown on the dark path before him, what guidance would he receive to set free his own energy, which certainly did not see the solution of the riddle in suicide?

Immediately on his return from the Pitti Palace and his parting with the blind Minister, who was in a state of great distress, Guerra had drawn up a telegram to Menozzi, accepting the Livornese demands, for the political realization of which he placed himself at the disposal of the Radical movement. But it had not been dispatched and was still lying on his writing-table, already covered by another document, which had been sent in from the palace by the officer in charge of the guard whose duty it was to keep the Grand Duke a prisoner. He asked whether Princess Maria Corleone's repeated request to be admitted to the presence of the Prince should be

granted. Guerra had not yet granted permission, possibly because he had not had time to do so, possibly because he was hurt or perplexed that Maria Corleone should not have appealed to himself direct.

At about ten o'clock things grew quieter, and Guerra was able to take a little food and drink. One-eyed Orestes, who had a fatiguing day behind him and was expecting to be relieved by his colleague, was leaning wearily against the open door leading to the ante-room.

"I don't suppose anybody else will come now," he observed.

"It's too soon to be certain of that, old friend," replied Guerra, with a strange absent-minded smile. Orestes gazed at him and rubbed his chin.

"Why, if I might make so bold as to ask, are you in such good spirits, Signor Guerra? I should like to know, because I am far from cheerful."

"I don't even know myself, old friend. Possibly because I always feel the greatest confidence in myself and exult in it."

"Confidence in yourself!" repeated Orestes, the thinker. "But supposing somebody, some good-for-nothing Tom, Dick, or Harry, egged on by mad rage, were to aim a pistol at you and cock the trigger, what would be the good of all that then, Signor Guerra—I mean of your self-confidence, and the dictatorship, and all the people who are here and who, the moment they reached the ante-room, had a very different expression on their faces from what they had in your presence?"

"It would be no good to me at all then," rejoined Guerra, smiling to himself once more; "or, since it would make me unaware that my last moment had come, and therefore much happier than if I were full of fears of death, it might be some good. But perhaps it might not even do that!"

"It always upsets me and makes me quite furious," declared Orestes, "when I see people who no longer believe in you, Signor Guerra."

"And does that account for your low spirits tonight, my dear fellow?"

"Yes, unfortunately!"

"And why do you still believe in me, although your mind is full of black thoughts about pistols and head-hunting?"

Orestes looked up.

"Why can't the two things go together, Signor Guerra? Must I lose faith in you because any lout can shoot at you?"

"There you are right again," observed Guerra. Presently the door of the ante-room was opened.

"Here's Othello," said Orestes, shrugging his shoulders compassionately; "he still believes in miracles!"

And he went out, leaving the door open. From his writing-table Guerra could see through the open door into the ante-room. It was not Othello, but a carabineer, who whispered a few words to the one-eyed man. Guerra suddenly felt keenly interested. Orestes came back.

"There is a man there who insists on seeing you and refuses to be turned away. A man called Carlo Malossi. . . ."

"Malossi?" interrupted Guerra, putting his hand to his brow. "Yes, but that is. . . . Search him for arms, and show him in!" —

It was the name under which in 1830 he had lived in Fiesole and made love to little Maria Pia. Such a coincidence was out of the question; no stranger could bear the name of Malossi! It must be somebody who knew the significance of the name. Why had he come? What was going to happen now?

He could see into the ante-room as far as the door leading to the stairs. It opened. He felt himself going hot all over. But he could see only Orestes, who returned to the office, his wrinkled face looking anxious and angry.

"I don't like the man," he declared. "It is true he has no arms on him, but there's something wrong about his name. He's the fellow who once called on you in Livorno, Signor Guerra, and when he left, the expression on neither of your faces was pleasant."

"I know who it is!" exclaimed Guerra. "Bring him in."

Orestes shrugged his shoulders and left. His dislike of the

Signore's old acquaintances was no longer a whim, it was a determined attitude, based on observation and experience. The Signore was frequently stubborn to his own disadvantage.

Guerra did not follow him with his eyes, but looked down at the table, trying to pull himself together. "What is going to happen now?" he asked himself again. His eyes happened to fall on the inquiry from the officer of the Palace Guard. What was the meaning of all this hesitation and all this foolish waiting? How could he dare to torment that woman? — And, seizing a pencil, he wrote: "Princess Corleone may enter and leave the Palace at any time; no difficulties whatever are to be put in the way of her visiting the Grand Duke."

He looked up. The outer door of the ante-room opened and Orestes entered. He made a surly gesture, showing the way to a man who was behind him.

The latter, looking in the direction indicated, could see Guerra on the other side of the writing-table through the open door leading into the office. He noticed that Guerra had already seen him, and bowed his head. As he came forward, his thin knees were visible against his trousers. He hardly moved his arms as he walked, which gave him an odd rather than a clumsy or humble appearance. One shoulder was rather higher than the other, and his legs jerked forward in his trousers like stilts. Guerra did not take his eyes off him.

Renzo Maddii halted on the threshold of Guerra's office, but only for a moment, and then walked in. He kept his eyes on his feet, holding his head slightly to one side. The room was a large one, and the writing-table was close to the farthest wall. "Why doesn't he stop?" thought Guerra. With bent knees Renzo drew closer and closer. Guerra wanted to shout to him to stop, but the exclamation had not reached his lips before he felt ashamed and said nothing. Renzo remained standing opposite him, just in front of the writing-table; he could almost have touched him with his hand, and, raising his eyes, he gazed at Guerra. His face had grown thinner and looked as though it had been etched, it was so lined, cadaverous, grey, and

unshaven. The stubborn brow was deeply furrowed with great long lines reaching from temple to temple. His eyes were grey, cold, and determined, as Guerra had always known them.

A murderer, thought Guerra suddenly, flushing hot. To placate him he raised his hand and held it out to his visitor. But he dropped it again, for Renzo did not move.

"Why do you give yourself a false name, Renzo?"

"So as not to be turned away."

"But I could have had Malossi sent away too!"

"No," replied Renzo, pursing his lips, and moving his chin as though he were chewing something. Then he swallowed and his eyes twitched, as he murmured: "For God's sake — no! . . ."

Guerra jumped to his feet, leant across the table, and, seizing Maddii by the lapel of his coat, drew him towards him.

"What — what's the matter . . . ?" he demanded. Renzo continued to chew, closed his eyes under his trembling hand, as though he were going to have a fit, opened them again, and looked calmly, coldly, and maliciously at the face so close to his. Guerra released him and he adjusted his coat and stepped back.

"Come," he said in low, stern tones. "It is your duty."

"All right," replied Guerra. And, glancing over the writing-table, he seized the telegram to Menozzi and tore it up. Picking up the permit for Princess Corleone, he went into the ante-room, where he found the somewhat sleepy Othello, who had just relieved the one-eyed Orestes. In his heart of hearts Guerra was glad not to have to deal with the sharp-witted Orestes, with his stubborn anxiety on his behalf. In the strange and mysteriously compelling circumstances any question would have been torture. He handed Othello the order for the Commandant of the Palace and told him to give it to an orderly at once, saying that he was going out and could not tell when he would be back.

Guerra's impenetrable mask of a face had already disap-

peared. Othello, suddenly awake to the facts, gazed after him with a question on his lips, scrutinizing the cadaverous figure of the man who, with arms stiff and head slightly to one side, was following his master out. He was not endowed with the profound scepticism nor the depth of understanding of his one-eyed colleague. He judged things from a more physical point of view. The man who was following Guerra was obviously a weakling, and therefore not dangerous—thus, more or less, did he argue. His stalwart master would have made two of such a wretched specimen, so there was no need to offer to accompany the Signore, who, in any case, would not have listened to him.—The two had already vanished while Othello was still gazing at the door. Sor Gasto had not even said good-night. Even if this was of no significance, nevertheless the fact remained that at midnight Juan's ghost wandered about, and as it was the ghost of a murdered man, it too was murderous. Othello felt uneasy.

Renzo, in the soft, determined manner familiar to Guerra, which gave him the air of knowing what the future had in store, refused to take a conveyance. Again Guerra obeyed silently, not even troubling to think what Renzo's reasons could be. From the beginning this night had spared him both question and answer and even need for reflection. Things had happened of their own accord; people came and went, acted, and ordered with a marvellously simple and irresistible determination.

The two men walked fast. A light warm drizzle was falling. The air was oppressive and opaque with mist. Guerra was breathing through his mouth, and his shirt clung to his moist skin. Renzo, ever a step ahead, was now swinging his arms violently and hastening his pace more and more.

They were turning along the Lungarno. The quay-side moved slowly and indolently by, like the river beneath it. The fog-lamps swung their soft lights in unison like a tearful lullaby. There was also a murmur in the air, vague notes, sad as death. Not a soul was to be seen. "We might be alone in

the world, the last men, running away from ourselves," thought Guerra.

They passed Maria Corleone's house. It was plunged in darkness. "I hope," thought Guerra, without looking up, "that she is already with him; I hope the officer of the guard has not been over-zealous in the performance of his duties. I should like to see them both again some day; one cannot be too kind to good people."

They were on the bridge. Turning to the left, Renzo ran up the slope; he was bending forward on his tottering legs and swinging his arms wildly. Guerra followed, breathing fast and heavily. But he did not care. He did not even feel the little pricks in his heart as pain. In this headlong rush towards the thing that was drawing ever nearer, there was nothing either alarming or even mysterious. On the contrary, it was full of beauty, and its sadness seemed to be surrounded by a sort of halo which followed them like a mythical star.

The water beneath them gurgled. "It was here," thought Guerra, "that I once thought of flinging Renzo into the river. Had I done so, how terrible would the end of my life have been, how poor!"

Renzo tore down the slope of the bridge into the Via Maggio. A cat or a rat, scampering away from Guerra's feet, made him hold his rattling breath for the fraction of a second. In the momentary pause he again heard the mournful murmur in the air. Pressing his fists to his chest, he was at Renzo's side in two strides. Yes, it was Renzo, who was humming with horrible monotony.

"What?" cried Guerra, bending his ear to his companion's murmuring lips. His sinister singsong was incomprehensible. But he now began to run, working his long legs like piston-rods. Guerra also ran, not an inch behind him, neck to neck.

"Louder!" panted Guerra. "Louder!"

Suddenly Renzo turned his shaking head to him, his face distorted with grief, a distraught, raving face, and shouted his refrain:

"She is bleeding, bleeding, bleeding. . . ."

Guerra kept well abreast of him, never faltering. Nothing faltered in him. But the mysterious beauty of life grew brighter, his breath came more gently, the time ahead, towards which he, like a loving god, was running, drew every moment nearer. He ran faster, faster than Renzo. Pressing his fists into his sides, he supported Renzo's back with his projecting elbow and pushed him along with him.

"What about the baby?" he inquired, quite low. But Renzo heard him distinctly and leant his weight ever more heavily against Guerra's arm. Not daring to slacken his pace, Guerra put his arm round Renzo's puny back and pushed him forward with his shoulders. Renzo stumbled. Guerra supported him.

"The baby . . ." stammered Renzo, "dead, dead and gone. . . ."

He wanted to slow down, but Guerra urged him on. A few more steps and Renzo, overcoming his weakness, wrenched himself roughly from Guerra's arm and, with a look of hatred, ran ahead again. Guerra let him go.

Renzo now took a turning to the right, into the maze of streets round San Spirito—a poor quarter, malodorous, badly lighted, with pavements full of holes and pools of water. The air was damp. Like resolute beggars, the tumble-down houses exhibited their infirmities, even through the mantle of the night. Many of the alleys and passages were not lighted at all. Soon the houses right and left seemed to be more closely packed together—evil houses, misanthropic houses, like those Guerra had known in the Ghetto. They were houses capable of putting obstacles in the way of good human work. Guerra began to feel frightened. There was much at stake. At that moment he was the most important man in the world, he was indispensable. The houses, which concealed all manner of people within their decaying walls, knew it better than he did. They might trip him up or roll a stone in his path—they might crash down in the dark and crush him, so as to prevent

him from reaching his goal which was now so near. He could no longer see or hear his guide. He was running with outstretched arms and with a desperate will in his feet which prevented him from stumbling, slipping, or falling. The houses right and left, angry and spiteful, now took off one veil of the night. No, they were no mere scenes of misery, they concealed misery—the poor. Guerra and Renzo were no longer alone in the world. Guerra's ears had suddenly caught the sound of human beings in stifling proximity. He did not know whether Renzo had heard it. His ear caught the sound of a child crying, a man swearing, and a woman shrieking. The crying, swearing, and shrieking seemed merely a sample of the general misery right and left, produced for his sake, for him, the most indispensable of men. "Why do I hear no laughter and no sound of singing?" he asked himself. A woman was shrieking incessantly, as though she were being beaten by her husband, or as though she were ill or in pain. Possibly it was not always the same woman, but the emblematic cry of the sex suffering from blows, child-birth, hunger, and misery.

Guerra was not breathing so heavily. He had also ceased to fear the adventure and the evil-looking houses. They could be overcome because of his fateful importance. And they were overcome. The beauty of life does not grow less because its ugliness is great.

With a faint cry of fear Guerra pushed into Maddii. Renzo stood still, apparently unheeding, and, flinging open the door of one of the houses, he went in. A murky greyish brown light, which came from an oil-lamp standing in a niche in the wall, shed its wretched rays into the street. Guerra followed his guide into the house. The sordid staircase reeked of vinegar and of a smoking lamp. Renzo picked up the little lantern and climbed the short, steep, worn staircase. Without turning to look at his companion, he left the front door open. Guerra followed on his heels, in order to share the benefit of the meagre light. All he could see in front of him was a portion of the dilapidated staircase and Renzo's muddy trousers, which

flapped about his thin legs as though they were wooden stumps as he ascended.

The only sound to be heard was the clumping and shuffling of their feet. Guerra could smell his wet clothes and his perspiring body. The house was still as death. "She is not crying out," he thought. "Is that a bad sign?"

Upstairs Renzo opened a door, apparently the first he reached. They crossed a room in which on a small bed—a child's bed—lay an exceedingly old man. His face looked perished and withered, his vulture nose pointed up at the ceiling, his eyes were open, and the light entering the room did not disturb him. But he did not look at them, he only held his wrinkled hands up and spread them feebly on his chest, moving his forefingers incessantly. Then they went through a larger almost empty room, the tiles of which rang hollow. On a big bed lay a couple of children; their two heads were visible, one larger than the other. The elder child was crying softly and cast a strangely agonized look at the men. The other was either sleeping or pretending to sleep, and its face was cheerful.

They then went through an unoccupied room, which smelt stronger than ever of vinegar and disinfectants, as well as of coffee and some sickly, faintly sweet substance. Here Renzo placed the oil-lamp on a bare table.

"There!" he exclaimed firmly, almost menacingly. But he said no more and looked at Guerra with one eye half closed. It was a resolute face, quite devoid of feeling, like the barrel of a fire-arm.

"Murderer!" Guerra muttered very faintly, or possibly he only thought it. Renzo opened his grey eyes wide and gave a loud gasp, which sounded almost like a groan. Then turning round, he knocked at a door and opened it without waiting for an answer. All the previous scents now became stronger than ever, more particularly the sweet one. They entered side by side.

"At last!" exclaimed the doctor at the bedside, hastily covering the legs and body of the woman with the bed-clothes.

A midwife was standing like a block, lolling at the foot of the bed, but she did not look up.

Guerra glanced anxiously at the doctor's bald head. He was an energetic-looking man, whose skill and dexterity were obvious at the first glance. Guerra also caught sight of lint, basins, glasses, plugs of cotton-wool, and blood-curdling instruments, lying on the left-hand side of the room. To the right stood the bed, and over the bed there was a terrifying stillness. Guerra was overcome with grief. He felt desperate, furious. Had they fetched him there to look at death? Was it this that his importance and indispensability signified? — He forced himself to look down, to look at the bed.

Little Maria Pia was lying quite still and strangely helpless. But it was her position rather than her wan face, with its already sublime expression, that made her seem unhappy. The pillows had been taken away, her head was lower than her body, and her legs raised higher still. Even her arms were not free, but had been lifted above her head and tightly bound. Her tiny face — oh, what a tiny face! — was pointed, moist, and indifferent, her eyes were closed and her pale lips parted. What a face to have heavy black plaits on either side of it! Not strange, not familiar, not old, not young!

"Quick!" Guerra muttered, hardly knowing what he meant by the word. The energetic little man had turned to him.

"Yes, quick, very quick, in fact," he exclaimed in low eager tones. "You seem to grasp that everything depends on it. *Placenta prævia, accouchement forcée*, atony, hæmorrhages — dreadful things, dreadful words, my friend, even if you cannot understand them. But you see the result. Poor little woman, bled white, feels already on the edge, profound swoon, pulse almost gone. All the same, I prefer that to the restless ones, who gasp for breath, with a low pulse and breathlessness — they never survive. Those with a weak pulse are more likely to, particularly when Almighty God sends the right man for the job. And so you are the man! In this case we have no hope except in Almighty God and you. And, for the moment, you

are even more important than God Himself! Yes, quick! Take off your coat, open your shirt, and bare your arms."

As he spoke and gave his orders, he picked out and sterilized lancets and tubes, with fingers as quick and dextrous as his speech. Guerra tore off his coat, loosened his tie, his collar, and his shirt, and rolled up his shirt-sleeves. He felt as though he were faintly intoxicated. The doctor's words filled him with a sensation of extraordinary well-being, a wonderful and entirely new joy. "I have not lived in vain," he thought, "nor entirely at other people's expense. . . ."

"So you are the blood-giver," observed the restless little man, coming up to him again and tapping him gently. "No longer very young, it is true, but all due respect to your chest and biceps! They are more than strong, they are athletic—good, good, my dear sir—in every way an example for the scraggy cat of a husband, who can make children, it is true, but who cannot spare the eighteen ounces of blood which are necessary here."

Guerra turned his head and glanced at Renzo for the first time in that room. "It can't be a very friendly look," he thought, "and perhaps it is not quite right to look at him just now. It must hurt him and increase his hatred." Renzo was standing in the farthest corner of the room, still chewing, staring, with pursed lips, not at Guerra's face, but at his broad chest.

"Right away!" cried the doctor, with a strange passionate and almost terrifying note of joy in his voice, and brandishing a small glittering object in his hand. "Right away, my gladiator! Artery bound to vein! Bold and direct! Not any feeble draining of the *vena mediana*, a miserable mess in a pot, followed by a dead-and-alive injection, as the other antiquated old surgeons do it. No, my representative of God! He who knows and loves blood as I do knows how to treat it. Into the *arteria radialis*, the powerful pumper! You need not look if you don't want to, my chivalrous knight!"

The scene was weird as a nightmare. Guerra was sitting on a

low stool near the bed. Little Maria Pia's thin arms were unbound and lowered. She let them do what they liked. His naked arm lay close to her arm, almost touching it. He saw her skin and all her little veins. He saw her childlike shoulder and rounded breast. He saw her soft long-suffering chin. And now he recognized sweet little Maria Pia with the long plaits, which tickled his chin—the house in Borgunto was before his eyes, the balcony and the yard—she used always to be singing little songs. . . .

Then he felt a sharp pain. The active little man was stooping over them both like a vampire. Guerra closed his eyes. The pain was acute, a prick, a cut, a burrowing—dreadfully deep.

But, after all, what is pain? It is the gateway to a miracle. The miracle was not accomplished for nothing. Guerra opened his eyes. Between his arm and hers stretched a little glass bridge—blood-red!

“Now you two are nicely joined together!” exclaimed the energetic little man, his voice falsetto with excitement.

It streamed! The blood, almost joyously bright, streamed from him to her.—“What infinite joy!” groaned Guerra between his clenched teeth; what a voluptuous, unspeakably voluptuous experience! What was that other inspiration, the inspiration of words, compared with this pouring of life into the beloved? . . . He laid his head on the bed, and the fragrance of her hair met his nostrils. He looked into her peaceful face—so quiet, so motionless at such a moment! Where does life cease in the stream, where does it begin? And the reward for such love, little Maria Pia, the reward! He had kept his word, after all—the spark of the divine was in him—oh, open those eyes, child, sweet girl—for even if you stir only a finger, it will be thanks enough. . . . And lo! a faint tremor went up her arm and from her childlike shoulder to her chin. It was barely perceptible, but her chin rose and brought her teeth softly together. Only he in all the world heard that. . . .

“Enough!” cried the busy little man. His nimble fingers

were already at work on the little bridge, showing no reverence. Guerra turned his face away. He did not want to witness the end of the miracle. He noticed that Renzo had drawn closer, much closer; he was standing near the table on which lay the instruments, the glasses, and the lint. Leaning slightly against him, bending forward and stretching his long neck, he stared at the bed, at the spot where the little glass tube had been, and sobbed. His Adam's apple was jerking violently and Guerra saw so much pain in his face that he closed his eyes. Then the doctor began to attend to his arm and told him to stand up. The needle stuck deep in the wound rocked painfully and was pulled out. His arm was suddenly bandaged tightly in a sling, and he felt other fainter and more superficial pricks.

"There, my dear fellow," exclaimed the little man, busy suturing the artery, "a mighty bleeding, almost thirty ounces. But you can bear it, you centurion. By the bye, you are extraordinarily alike—"

"Cold shivers," exclaimed the midwife in a calm oily voice from the bed.

"No bad sign either," replied the doctor. Renzo had come up to the bed, but his back was turned to the sick woman, and he stood like a wall between her and Guerra and watched the skilful work of the doctor, who was already binding up the wound.

"Done!" cried the brisk little man. "Thank you, I don't want you any more." And he turned towards the bed. Guerra slowly pulled down his shirt-sleeves and clutched at his collar.

"Quicker than that!" exclaimed Renzo suddenly, standing close up to him. Guerra gazed at him, anxious to get by him to look at the bed. But he could not; it would have been wrong.

"Do you think, doctor. . . ?" he ventured to ask. But the doctor was no longer paying any attention to him. Renzo seized Guerra's hat and coat.

"Go!" he said sternly. "Put these things on in the next room."

And, going over to the door with the things, he waited. Guerra obeyed. At the door he turned towards the bed. He could not help himself. Little Maria Pia was lying just as he had seen her when he first entered, pale and pinched, but how near she seemed to him as he looked! Her slender arm was disfigured by a dark plaster, at the spot where the little bridge of blood had been. The doctor's bald head was on her breast, listening.

"Fine, fine!" said the little man, straightening himself.

"Go!" panted Renzo. And Guerra went into the next room; Renzo followed him, closed the door, and remained standing in front of it like a sentry. Guerra fastened his collar and arranged his tie and, taking his coat from Renzo's hands, drew it on. Then he took his hat.

"Now it is time for the murder—is that what you're thinking, Renzo?"

"Go!"

"But what is the good of it, Renzo? She's got it in her blood. The body knows it and will tell her when she awakes. You are miscalculating. You are only making yourself more miserable than you need be."

"I am unhappy," replied Renzo. "It is impossible to imagine anything worse. And you are happy. I can't bear to look at your eyes any longer."

"Why did you make me happy, then, Renzo?"

"I did not mean to," Maddii muttered in reply. "It is impossible to compete with people who are always preferred. . . ."

"Then why did you fetch me, Renzo?"

"Why—why? . . ." exclaimed Renzo, trembling all over. "You must surely know why, or guess! That business with the blood is a very dangerous affair; the doctor told me so. There are bloods that do not harmonize, and which kill, he said—and I knew that your blood would not kill her. . . ."

His breath came faster and faster. Suddenly he burst into a short violent fit of sobbing and, heedless of all else, stamped his foot on the floor.

"Go! . . ."

And Guerra turned and left. Renzo followed with the oil-lamp.

Both children were sleeping now.—The old man was still lying awake, playing with his fingers.

The front door was still open. Renzo placed the light in the niche and, stepping out into the street with Guerra, closed the door.

"I can find my way alone," said Guerra. Renzo did not reply, but walked behind him. It was still raining. Out in the air Guerra was conscious of a slight feeling of giddiness, but it was only for a moment, and then the old physical assurance returned. He stopped and turned round. Maddii also stopped.

"I could put my hand into your pocket again now," said Guerra, "as I did that night on the bridge, and take away your weapon. Or I might be content with giving you a sharp blow in the neck with my fist. But I shall do neither. I feel such confidence in you. So go home, Renzo!"

Maddii was silent. Guerra walked on; he could hear Renzo following him.

He returned by a different route, for he had something else he wanted to do. Turning to the right into the Via Maggio, he did not go towards the bridge. The street was silent as the grave. Behind him he heard Renzo's slovenly footsteps.

He had not far to go. Taking a short cut to the left, he was at the Pitti Palace in a moment. The palace rose blind and deaf in its massive stillness.

Guerra waited for Renzo.

"There are guards everywhere," he said. "It's no use! Go home, Renzo!"

Renzo's face was ashen grey in its insensate stubbornness. He neither answered nor went away.

"I shall have you arrested, Renzo," said Guerra to frighten him. But he showed no signs of fear.

"That would be the simplest thing to do," he replied

without moving. "But you haven't the faintest intention of doing it, you damnable speculator in souls!"

"Why do you insult me?" inquired Guerra sadly, and crossed the Piazza. Renzo remained in the shadow of a house.

The Palace guard started with fright when the Dictator emerged from the night. The Commandant, alarmed and mistrustful, reported that Princess Corleone, on receiving the permit, had immediately gone to the Grand Duke and was still with him.

"Good!" replied Guerra. "Just announce me, please."

The officer of the guard gazed at the rebel, a notoriously unaccountable and fearless man, a desperado with mysterious motives—a would-be assassin without a judge.

"I am responsible for the safety of the Prince, your Excellency," he replied hoarsely. "You will not mind if I remain in the room or near at hand during the interview?"

Guerra laughed. It was a fine captivating laugh.

"Fool!" he exclaimed. "What are you thinking about? But perhaps the Prince will not feel any jollier at the sight of me, so why frighten him? So don't announce me. Order a travelling-chaise and the best and freshest horses from the royal stables."

The officer was too much astonished to notice the insult.

"What time do you want the carriage to be ready?" he asked, completely taken aback.

"Now, at once! Please give me some ink and paper.—Thank you! I am going to write you a permit for the Grand Duke and Princess Corleone in case she may wish to accompany him. I should be glad if she would.—The road to Faenza is perfectly safe. You, sir, will accompany the Prince either to Lieutenant-General Walden's headquarters or as far as Rimini, whichever the Grand Duke prefers. I hold you responsible for getting the carriage through the Porta a Pinti within two hours from now, or at any rate before dawn. Greet the Prince for me and tell him that even he may not hold his humanitarian tongue when he enters Florence with the Austrians. By that

I don't mean that one hand should wash the other. So I do not connect his humanity with my person, for I shall probably be helped by the other side.— Give my respects to the Prince—*addio!*”

The officer raised a hand to his helmet, and every muscle of his face was stiff. Guerra turned away.

“Your Excellency!” someone called after him, “wait a moment! The Princess is just coming!”

But he walked on.— No, no, he must not see her again, he must not confuse her any more, confront her with a choice, or take her from him!

“Guerra!” cried Maria Corleone, in a voice full of fear at her own daring.

But he went on all the faster.— No, he must not hurt her by his joy! Her love made her clear-sighted, and she would see, not only Maria Pia, but also Renzo, the murderer!

“Gasto!” cried Maria Corleone, losing her self-control.

Guerra had already turned into the Via dei Guicciardini. He was walking more slowly now. Renzo caught him up. He stopped.

“My happiness makes me bullet-proof, Renzo. Go home!”

“You blasphemer!” cried Renzo.

Going up to him, Guerra grasped his thin arms firmly in his hands, as he had done on the bridge in March.

“No, Renzo,” he replied, shaking him. “I am not blaspheming today, nor do I speculate in souls. I have just sent the Grand Duke out of the city, so that he may go on living like Maria Pia. As long as you keep running at my heels with your feeble lust for murder, I shall go round saving people. There are always people to save, you fool! You won't be able to shoot me today. Tomorrow will be a common ordinary day, not a miraculous one. It will be full of politics and enmity, Renzo, so you can mingle with the crowd if you like. Now go back to your sick wife!”

And he turned the gaunt creature round and gave him a push. Renzo stumbled and fell and remained lying in the road

like a drunkard. But Guerra pursued his way towards the Ponte Vecchio, his body light as air, his brain over-alert.

His two old soldiers were waiting for him. Othello, unable to control his anxiety and his fears of Juan's ghost, had roused his companion. And when his master returned, apparently unscathed, he kissed him on both cheeks in a boisterous outburst of joy.

"We were terribly anxious," he confessed, "and were just on the point of sending out patrols."

Guerra laughed his happy laugh. Orestes, the more reserved of the two, gazed intently at him.

"Signor Guerra," he said, "your sister has been here."

Sensitive as he was, he was afraid the news would not please the Signore overmuch and might destroy his good cheer, which was as astonishing as it was unaccountable. But Guerra's face did not even grow grave. "My sister — splendid!" he replied with an enigmatic smile.

And he nodded and reflected. Orestes gazed at him in astonishment and wondered what it was that made Guerra more lovable than ever at that moment. Othello, whose coarser nature was now relieved with regard to Juan's ghost, began talking excitedly. The Signora, he said, had reached Florence by the last train from Livorno; the Livornese were marching on the city and had now got about as far as Empoli. They had torn up the railway lines and cut the telegraph wires.

"Now shut up," said his one-eyed colleague. Guerra, deep in thought, looked up.

"You must get a carriage, my friend," he said, with a smile. "It is not the first I have ordered tonight."

"For tonight?" cried Othello, lifting his hands in horror.

"Didn't he say so?" exclaimed Orestes reproachfully. Guerra looked from one to the other.

"I entrust you with the glorious task of taking my sister to Paris. That is by no means easy in the present circumstances, as you know, and requires a shrewd head, Orestes, and a stalwart sergeant-major, Othello. You have not only got to keep

a sharp look-out on the road, but also on the lady. If she escapes, I shall refuse to have anything more to do with you. You will drive through the Porta San Niccolo and go *via* Grassina and Greve to Siena, which you should reach to-morrow morning, and thence to Piombino, where you will have to find some means of getting over to Corsica. After that it will be child's play."

The one-eyed retainer, his face very grave and set, had opened his white eye.

"But, Sor Gasto," exclaimed Othello impulsively, "are you dismissing us? Do you want to be rid of us? You want . . ."

"Shut up!" cried Orestes angrily.

"Listen, Othello," replied Guerra, "what should I look like if the day after tomorrow the Austrians arrived and took away your rank, or not satisfied with that, dug up the records and found you were a deserter? So just wait quietly in Paris until I come, or until I send for you. Meantime you will find the *Capo* the kindest of masters."

Othello's face went grey, and as his manliness left much to be desired, he began to cry. Orestes, with a sharp twist of his head to the left, called him insulting names.

"He deserves you even less than I do, Signor Guerra," he observed.

In the drawing-room of his official residence Madda lay asleep in a deep arm-chair. Guerra gazed at her. Her face looked tired and old. He stroked her hair softly. She opened her eyes in faint alarm, but when she saw him, she smiled.

"Yes, Gasto," she said softly, "be kind to me."

He took her hand. She explained that she had got only as far as Spezia and had then returned to Livorno, owing to the unsettled state of the roads. Perhaps she ought to have tried to reach the south of France by sea, but it had not taken her long to make up her mind to go to Livorno.

"Was I wrong, Gasto?"

"No!"

She had come in order to warn him. The Livornese, who

were marching on Florence, were hostile to him, and Menozzi was already using the slogan "High Treason!" Guerra would have a difficult fight, unless he met the Opposition with a show of Radicalism and took the wind out of their sails. It was to tell him this and to urge this course upon him that she had come. Would he forgive her?

Guerra listened calmly, holding her head between his hands as he did so.

"Madda," he asked, "did you kill Caminer?"

She looked up and tried to read the expression in his eyes.

"I drove him to suicide," she replied, "but he was very nearly there already."

"And what about the expiation?"

"I can't kill myself, Gasto! I should always feel I was missing something in your life. I adore you! I can't help it!"

Guerra took her head in his hands and gazed into her eyes.

"To some small extent, in so far as it affected politics, I have made good his death, Madda. Tonight I have sent the Grand Duke to the Austrians."

She was still looking at him.

"Now I shall stay with you, Gasto. Now I am necessary to you. Death is coming to both of us now."

Guerra smiled.

"Just look at me, Madda. I am very happy, I assure you. I am not thinking of death at all. I have never been so little in need of you."

Madda opened her mouth, but said nothing.

"Today I have overcome death, Madda, the death of the woman I loved. What can you do by stopping here, Madda? You will miss nothing more. You must learn to understand that."

He kissed her and pulled her out of the chair. She said nothing, nor did she cry; she merely looked at him aghast. He rang the bell.

"My old friends, Othello and Orestes, will escort you to your husband, Madda," he said as he did so. "Your husband

is much more important for the future than I am. I am an egoist, as you will see."

And he smiled once more. Orestes came in, looking very pale.

"My sister is ready, old friend. Are you ready too?"

"Yes," replied the one-eyed man with an effort.

* * * *

Guerra was standing on the steps in front of the Palazzo, between Michelangelo's David and the clumsy stone Hercules, gazing after the carriage which drove across the deserted square towards the Via dei Calzaioli. It had been a somewhat agitating farewell, though of the three only the impetuous Othello had cried. But Madda's stiffness and her low brief words had been extremely unnerving, and Orestes, who had completely lost control of his blind eye, which now stared wide and milky, had on taking leave whispered into his ear, as though it were a great secret, that he would never see him again.

"Do you know, Renzo," Guerra cried out into the darkness of the Uffizi colonnade (for it seemed to him that the man was standing there), "do you know who is driving away in that carriage? My sister Madda, so that she may continue to live, like Maria Pia. Do you remember Madda, you fool?"

He heard a man running away.

4

The blind Minister came early in the morning.

"Guerra, the Prince has fled!"

Guerra smiled. The blind man turned his sensitive brow to him, but it was some time before the brow could see the smile and take it in. Then the blind man also smiled.

"By God, you have not lost!" he exclaimed from his distant height. "Now it depends on the people!"

* * * *

The Livornese Radicals marched into Florence. The proletarian suburbs joined them, eager for a fight and bent on creating a disturbance. Guillotine, the pugilist, the chief of the criminals, led his janizaries out of the confines of the Via del Campuccio, making Guerra his battle-cry. Salomone, with the Ghetto Jews, marched on to the Ponte Santa Trinità to hold a demonstration; they thought that Guerra's great day had come. Pandemonium reigned. Rumours were as rife as motes in the air and confused the mind of the mob. No slogan gained the upper hand, and any cry unfavourable to Guerra was immediately howled down by cheers in his favour. Father Menozzi cursed in the most un-Christian way. He did not even succeed in obtaining precise information about the Grand Duke. In order to arouse the indignation of his followers on the way to the Piazza, he had the clumsiest of rumours circulated, to the effect that Guerra had fled with the Grand Duke.

"Children!" roared Guillotine of the rocklike chin, "I tell you Guerra shot the Austrian as he was trying to escape! Our Guerra is all right!"

"Our Guerra!"

The Piazza began to fill. The stone flags vanished beneath the feet of the crowd. The square seemed to be paved with heads. Long live the Republic!

* * * * *

Guerra, the blind man, Bottai, and Scaleterra were not uneasy.

"Have you a definite plan?" the blind Minister asked Guerra.

"No," replied Guerra; "but I have a definite intention — to spare men's lives."

"Splendid!" exclaimed the blind man. "But even supposing you are successful on the Piazza, tomorrow the Austrians will be here."

"Then not only will the pistols have vanished, but also the Livornese, you may be certain of that."

"Splendid! And you, Guerra?"

"I shall be there, of course, if only not to ruin my own value as propaganda. I have borrowed that expression from the vocabulary of my brother-in-law, the *Capo*. I am an asset as an accused patriot facing the white tunics of the Austrians, and as a delinquent, but above all, of course, in the sand pit with my body riddled by Austrian bullets—possibly as a fugitive at the last moment, if the Grand Duke insists upon taking the matter seriously."

"We will stay with you, of course," said Bottai and Scaleterra.

"Don't you intend to negotiate with Menozzi first, Signor Guerra?" the blind man now inquired.

The cry could be heard: "The Republic and Guerra!"

"Listen to the reply, Marchese," observed Guerra, with a laugh. "I don't need to negotiate. The tenor only needs a stage, the crowd, and a few words to recite!"

And he went to the door laughing, his eyes shining.

"Now the opera begins!"

Scaleterra and Bottai went with him. The blind man alone, his eyebrows twitching, wrung his hands anxiously.—"Why should I be anxious, why?" he muttered under his breath, trying to compose himself. And, calling his secretary, the conscientious little seminarist, he told him to lead him on to an iron balcony high above the Piazza. A flag fluttered above his head, at his feet rolled the living waves of the crowd.

"I envy him!" he sighed.

* * * * *

Guerra was standing on a table in the Loggia dei Lanzi.

Guerra!

Republic!

"Traitor!" roared Menozzi from the depths of his wild dishevelled beard.

"Our Guerra!" cried Guillotine, the janizaries, and the Jews on the Piazza.

Guerra raised his hat and waved it. The sun broke obediently through the clouds and illumined his handsome, enraptured face. He raised his other hand and threw back his head.

The Piazza was silent. All eyes were upon him.

Guerra, with arms raised, opened his mouth.

* * * * *

Secrecy and a peculiar curse attend the first shots of a revolution. There is no need for them to lodge in any body; they suffice as a signal. On this occasion, however, the bullet struck home, though not in the victim's handsome face, which it was perhaps intended to obliterate, but in his neck. His mouth remained open, his arms were still uplifted. For one second Guerra stood upright, a fountain of blood. Then he fell backwards.

But it was not a signal! The Piazza was dumb, as death loved it to be.

High up in the air, above the myriad heads, a cry rang out. But the crowd hardly troubled to look up.

"Why — why isn't he speaking?" exclaimed the blind man desperately from the balcony.

5

The fat Canon, Don Lionello Vacca, who was enamoured of his Age, was on the Piazza, whither his calling and inclinations had led him. He was not standing among the crowd, however, but on the steps of the Palazzo Vecchio, to get a better view. He took a genuine delight in Guerra, as he waved his hat, and the flattering ray of sunlight fell on his head. It also gave him pleasure to watch the crowd and he looked on contentedly. Suddenly, as he chanced to raise his eyes to the block of houses opposite, above the sheltering roof of the post office, he caught sight of a man at an open window, a thin gaunt man, who was fidgeting strangely with an object wrapped up in paper. Don Lionello, whose eyesight was good, saw that the man was holding the object aslant, pointing it down at the

Loggia — that he was aiming! Vacca raised his arms. It was like a word of command, for at that instant the shot rang out. What else could Don Lionello have done but raise his arms and let them drop again?

Don Lionello, who had a high opinion of Guerra, was genuinely distressed, although he had never been so excited in his life. Guerra's body, wrapped in a flag, was carried across the square by four men. Vacca knew them; they were Scaleterra, Bottai, the Jew Salomone, and Guillotine, the bandit the law could not touch. The four men raised the body in their arms and Guerra soared across the Piazza. All heads were bared. Many people knelt down, including Canon Lionello Vacca, who said a *Pater Noster* for the poor soul. Poor soul? He was filled with admiration for the great Guerra! It was the most impressive scene he had witnessed in his life.

But the kaleidoscopic panorama of history continued quickly to unfold, ever exciting and full of incident. And Lionello had to have recourse to all his wits and love of life, to enjoy all its phases and miss nothing. As a politician he was soon forced to admit that no speech Guerra could have made, even if it had been a miracle of eloquence and persuasiveness, could have accomplished what his death had done. The most elementary gratitude to the martyr demanded the support of the Government to which he belonged. The fact that the assassin was not discovered and was not even sought in the confusion was not surprising. What could Don Vacca say about a thin cadaverous man aiming a weapon from a window? God would punish him by robbing him of his peace of mind and damning his whole existence. And if he were clever, he would put an end to himself. Canon Vacca was a moralist by profession.

Marchese Bottai, surprisingly calm and collected, was the first to recognize the temper of the mob. With a few hundred carabinieri and the help of one or two lies to the effect that the Austrians were already in the outskirts of the city, he succeeded in disarming the three thousand Livornese rebels, who were

shouting for Menozzi to be appointed Radical Dictator and beginning to make a commotion in the streets.

Don Lionello continued to live on happy and interested in the Age. There was much to be seen yet, and his powerful frame guaranteed him the necessary endurance. He witnessed the peaceful entry of the white-tunicked Austrians and the downcast face of the Grand Duke, unable to look up in his triumph! He saw how the legend of Guerra became a silent and powerful influence in the land. But who, dear people, knew as much about Guerra as he, Lionello? And he was not very much older before he saw the back of the Grand Duke again, for the last time. Occasionally he still found himself obliged to go and pray to St. Bernard, with whom, as everybody knew, he was on excellent terms. What a life!

Life, magic life, never stands still!

ALFRED NEUMANN

has called himself "a typical man of 1895." That is to say, he is of the generation turned prematurely into men by the war — that generation which in Germany has produced so many men of talent. Alfred Neumann himself has earned a brilliant place among the novelists of Europe. THE DEVIL, his first book to be published in America, won him double applause as a psychologist and a teller of tales, and since then his fame has grown with the appearance of THE REBELS, to which this book is a sequel.



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